

Author: Ryuyu

Illustrator: Daburyu

4

Now I'm a
DEMON LORD!
Happily Ever After with
Monster Girls
in My **DUNGEON**



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The illustration depicts a young man with black hair and red eyes, wearing a grey t-shirt and black pants, holding a large red sword. He is standing next to a girl with long, flowing purple hair and blue eyes, wearing a light purple dress. In the background, a girl with blonde hair and a purple headband is visible, along with a small, dark, winged creature. The background is a dark, purple, crystalline landscape with a full moon.

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Prologue: Demon Lord's Laboratory

"Okey dokey, the demon lord's science class is now in session! Please raise your hand should you have any questions."

Iluna raised her hand excitedly after my announcement.

"Me! Pick me, Professor Yukiki! I have a question!"

"Go ahead, Miss Iluna."

"Whyyy are you wearing that funny white thing, Professoor?"

"Because, Miss Iluna, this is the uniform you need to wear when you're conducting experiments. Pretty cool, right?"

I spun around, modeling the white lab coat for them by flaring it dramatically around me.

"No! It's weird!"

"So not cool!"

Iluna and Shii answered at the same time, big, beaming smiles on their faces.

"Hm... Very white."

Ever so slightly off-sync with the other two, a black-haired little girl dressed in a kimono answered too. This girl, who looked like a traditional Japanese doll, was my beloved sword, Zaien, also known as En. She had only learned the Anthropomorphization ability a short time ago, but she was already pretty used to her human form. The way she moved now, you'd never know that she'd struggled with things like motor skills at first. Whenever she hung out with us, she almost exclusively stayed human, so she must've taken a liking to her new body.

"Mm, I see the problem here. Seems you have yet to truly understand the magnificence of this outfit, O pupils of mine."

Although to be honest, I privately agreed with them. It looked just like the white coats I'd had to wear in elementary school whenever it was my turn to serve food during lunchtime. Definitely uncool.

Watching us from the sidelines, Lefi spoke in an exasperated voice.

"Yuki, for what reason do you always value form over function?"

"I've got one for you too."

"What?"

"Here ya go! I'm sure it's the perfect size for you."

I pulled her lab coat from Inventory and presented it with a flourish.

“Hmm... I suppose this will suffice.”

She'd definitely wanted to make some sort of snarky comment for a second there. Guess she realized that it would've been a waste of time considering how I was acting. Instead, she just took the coat from me and slipped it on, shaking her head in resignation the whole time.

“Are you satisfied?”

“Sure am. Your obedience is most pleasing, Researcher Lefi. Now that I see it, though...it doesn't actually look that great on you!”

“You have the audacity to react like that when it was *you* who insisted I wear it?!”

My bad, my bad. But it was true. I was no fashionista, but even I could tell that the lab coat clashed horribly with that dress she always wore.

“Okay, okay. Just calm down, Researcher Lefi. No need to blow a gasket. The truth is, there's something I'd like your assistance with, so please play along for a little while longer.”

I could practically see the steam puffing out of Lefi. She was *pissed*, ready to tear off the coat and fling it away. My words stopped her, though, and she thought about it in silence for a second.

“I shall oblige at the cost of chocolate.”

“I'll give you two bars.”

“I desire four.”

“Don't push your luck. Three, final offer.”

“Hmph. Fine. Because I am possessed of a magnanimous disposition, I shall agree to your terms. My charitable heart will even deign to forgive an insolent whelp such as yourself.”

Lefi was talking herself *way* up. Even the way she had her arms folded was smug as hell. She didn't fool me, though—not with that little curl on her lips. If I had to guess, that smile was because she couldn't contain herself thinking about the chocolate she'd get after this. She fell for it hook, line, and sinker, just like she always did. *This dummy's such an easy mark.*

Why was I even surprised by that, though? At this stage in our relationship, I knew super well how totally not-difficult it was to lure her in. I wiped the surprise from my face before she could see it, cleared my throat loudly, and went back to speaking.

“Right. Pull yourselves together, everyone. We will now begin the experiment in earnest. As you can see, we have here a perfectly ordinary candle and a perfectly ordinary beaker. Oh, right, that word means nothing to you. Think of it as a glass cup. Lastly, we have this perfectly ordinary lid.”

“In short, you will perform some sort of illusion, yes?”

“Nope. This ain't sleight of hand.”

“Sleight of hand!”

“Your thumb!”

“It...will grow.”

The little-girl gang got all excited when they heard me say “sleight of hand.” A while back, I’d shown them a simple trick that made it look like my thumb had gotten longer. Couldn’t tell you why, but they’d gone nuts over it. Even after I’d shown them how it worked, they hadn’t stopped pestering me to do it over and over again. And of course, schmuck that I was, I’d given in and done it over and over again. So to them, “sleight of hand” now meant “thumb trick.”

“Slow your rolls, girls. I’ll do that trick another time. This is different, so focus up.”

I put the candle into the beaker, then lit it with a match. I was about to do a combustion experiment that anyone who had undergone compulsory education on Earth would know. See, our lovely little girls were enrolled in a basic homeschooling plan I’d created. Leila, our very capable maid, was teaching them things like math and language. As for science...

“‘Science’... What does that mean, exactly?”

Leila’s question had come as quite the shock, so I’d taken over that part of the curriculum. Turned out that magic’s existence in this world meant there was essentially no difference between magical phenomena and scientific phenomena. The people here lumped it all together as “magic”—science wasn’t technically a concept for them.

I could see why, to be honest. I mean, if someone wasn’t familiar with the laws of science, anything science-y that happened would look like magic to them. Since I’d been a liberal arts student in my old life, I myself had thought of science as a mysterious force despite knowing theories and stuff. Not to mention that it wouldn’t be far-fetched to call modern science “magic” in a way, so it made sense to me that science wasn’t really a thing in this world.

As someone who sucked massive whale dick at fire magic of any kind, I could at the very least start a match-level flame without setting myself or anyone else on fire. But I’d decided to forgo that and purposely bought real matches from the DP Catalog, one of which I had just used to light the candle. Why? Because I wanted to remove everything magic and magic-adjacent that I could from this experiment. Lighting the candle the way I did was a deliberate measure on my part to show that it was a purely physical phenomenon instead of a magical one.

An experiment like this didn’t require a ton of special equipment and resources. It didn’t need the person doing it—me—to have any sort of special, in-depth knowledge of how it worked either. That second part worked out well in my favor since I hadn’t exactly been what you’d call a “good student” in my old life. Long story short, this

was something easy that even a slacker like me could teach.

“Now, please observe. Can anyone tell me why this candle is burning?”

“Me! I can! It’s maaagic!”

Iluna’s hand shot up enthusiastically before she answered.

“That’s your go-to answer, huh? Unfortunately, that’s not it. Tell ’em, Lefi: is this flame consuming magical energy?”

“No, it is not.”

Lefi shook her head vigorously.

“Whaaat? I’m wrong?”

“Let’s see... If the candle is the only source of fuel for the fire, then closing that apparatus won’t extinguish the flame. Perhaps mana, the source of magic, is what’s being consumed?”

Leila, the living embodiment of intellectual thirst, was also participating in my experiment as a student. Though she was usually smiling, right now, you could tell just by looking at her that my question had her deep in thought.

“Sorry, but that’s wrong too. I want you to look reeeal closely at what I do next.”

I covered the beaker with the lid and in no time at all, the candle went out.

“Whaddya think, Lefi?”

“It is not consuming mana either.”

I could sense magical energy, but that didn’t extend to sensing its origin—to sensing mana itself. That was why I had The Honorable Judge Lefi on the case as my research assistant. Her response just now reassured me, because while yeah, I’d told Leila she was wrong, a small part of me had been worried that, considering this was another world, mana actually *would* be involved in combustion. Thanks to Lefi’s assessment, though, this particular phenomenon was the same here as it was on Earth.

“Well, if that is Lady Lefi’s judgment, I can’t possibly argue. But then, what precisely is the fuel?”

“It’s something called ‘oxygen.’ Just like mana, it’s in the air all around us. That’s how the flame was burning. Putting the lid on the beaker caused the flame to suck up all the oxygen inside and snuff itself out.”

That wasn’t technically a hundred percent correct, but since this was a primary-school-level experiment, my explanation didn’t have to be exact. Besides, if I gave them the chance to dig into it all, they’d eventually ask a question that stumped my humanities-majoring ass. It was better for everyone here not to have my cover blown.

“Oxygen, you say?”

“That’s right, Leila. There are components other than mana in the

air we breathe. This thing we call ‘fire’ burns by consuming oxygen and other substances. Except...”

I wrapped my hands around the still-covered beaker. When I did, the candle inside ignited again.

“This is another phenomenon. Can anyone tell me how the flame lit again?”

“Me! Pick me! It’s magic! I’m right this time!”

“That you are.”

When I nodded in agreement, Iluna squealed in delight and threw her hands up in the air. *Adorable.*

“Do you all understand that magic isn’t the only source of phenomena in this world now? When things burn, magic isn’t always the reason; natural causes exist too. Everyone breathes, right? A big reason we all breathe is to inhale oxygen. That’s why it hurts so much underwater. There’s no air, so you can’t take in oxygen.”

“I breathe!”

“Huh? I breathe too?”

“‘Breathe’...?”

While Iluna affirmed my words, Shii and En cocked their heads, both visibly puzzled. I was pretty sure En didn’t understand what the word “breathe” itself meant. *Ah, dang it, that’s on me.* I had just assumed it was common sense that all living things breathed, but in hindsight, that wasn’t always true in this world.

Shii was a slime, so she most likely didn’t actually have lungs. On top of that, she could ingest nutrients directly through her skin, which meant it was entirely possible that she breathed that way too. That wasn’t the case with En, though. Her true form was that of a sword, and as we all know, swords don’t breathe. And then there were the wraith triplets living in my castle. They didn’t have physical bodies, so they shouldn’t have been capable of breathing at all.

But wait, En ate food like a normal person, so maybe she *did* breathe? I had to find out.

“Scuse me for a sec.”

“...?”

I held my hand in front of En’s mouth, right under her nose, and... Nothing. No air going in or out. Interesting. So En *didn’t* breathe. Despite having a human form where she could do things like eat, it apparently just looked like one. Another mystery about her, solved.

Related, I’d learned something else about En recently. Her favorite food was meat, particularly Salisbury steak. Stoic little sword girl that she was, she was basically always expressionless, so it had been stupid hard to figure out what she liked to eat. But after watching her on the daily for a while, my efforts finally paid off when I discovered that the corners of her mouth curled up a few millimeters whenever she ate

meat of any kind, and just a teensy bit more than that when said meat was Salisbury steak. That particular puzzle had me tearing out my hair for longer than I cared to admit, lemme tell ya. But nothing was out of Demon Lord Yuki's wheelhouse when he set his mind to it! Throw a challenge his way and he'd figure it out! Eventually.

Getting back to our experiment, the ladies weren't the only ones who'd learned something from it. I now knew for sure that this world's atmosphere was pretty much the same as Earth's. If oxygen existed here, then that had to mean that other gases like carbon dioxide did too. In all likelihood, they probably weren't one-to-one between this world and my old one, but I was no scholar, so I wasn't gonna stress myself out by obsessing over small differences.

Knowing this, I theorized that even if the world was different, the environment was mostly the same since living things needed it that way in order to exist. The biggest difference between my new and old worlds would have to be the mana in the air here. Everything that lived in this world could convert that mana into magical energy, which made them able to use the absurd thing called "magic." Other than that, though, it looked like physical phenomena were basically the same in both worlds.

"Nom."

Not really sure why I was just standing around in front of her—I was lost in thought—En chomped down on my hand, which was still practically touching her face.

"Gaaahhh! I'm being eaten alive! Preyed upon by the mighty En, this wickedest of wicked researchers is now completely under her control!"

I hammed it up like the joker I was for her and the rest of my audience. Then, I snatched her up and hoisted her small body onto my shoulders in supplication.

"Huh...? Master, you are under my control?"

"Yeah, I am. And as your evil subordinate, it's my job to trap as many people as I can in the deepest, darkest depths of terror! Roaaar! Mwa ha ha!"

I curled my hands into claws and started roaring like a monster. Iluna and Shii immediately guessed what I was doing and started running away from me, shrieking with laughter.

"Eeeep!"

"Escape!"

"Gooo..."

En's voice sounded a bit louder than usual. I was almost positive she was having fun riding around on my shoulders while we chased Iluna and Shii, who were shouting gleefully.

"Roaaar! Bwa ha ha! Nice! Lefi secured, Commander! Okay, Lefi,

here's the deal. You've been brainwashed by En and her evil researcher, so you're no longer the scientist you once were. From here on out, you're gonna travel the forbidden road with me as our commander's second subordinate and fellow evil researcher."

Up until this moment, Lefi had been spectating. The look on her face as I thumped my hands on her shoulders pretty much said, "Ugh, not this again."

"What is with that outrageous setting? And must I truly take part in this farce?"

"Hell yeah, you must. I gave you that lab coat for a reason, ya know."

"You mean to tell me it was not even meant to be used for the experiment you just conducted?!"

Pfft. It totally was, believe it or not. I had no qualms about straight-up lying to her since I'd thought of this evil-researcher game of tag literally just now.

"C'mon, get your butt in gear. I need you to act like an evil researcher on the taboo path of wickedness right the frick now. Iluna and Shii are waiting, woman."

"Rgh! F-Fine, I understand. Keh keh keh! I have found my calling, and I will not stop until I discover the truth! You shall be the materials for my forbidden experiments!"

Although her delivery was a little stiff, Lefi did her best to act out the role I'd given her. She even posed in a way she thought an evil researcher would. *Ya know, Your Supreme Dragonliness, I sure do like that part of you a whole hell of a lot.* No matter how much she grumbled and protested, she always played whatever games me and the girls came up with.

"Oh no! Lady Lefifi brainwashed too!"

"Hee hee hee! I got an idea! We just gotta fight them with Miss Leila, our ree-sur-chur of justice!"

"Dear me, a researcher of justice, am I? I see. I accept my duty. In order to protect the people of the world, I bid you go forth, Researcher Lew!"

"Whuh? Me?"

Lew had apparently lost interest in the experiment halfway through, which I figured had something to do with the fact that she hated studying. She'd been keeping an eye on us ever since, but Leila's sudden order snapped her out of her bored stupor and she turned to her coworker with a surprised expression.

"You see, Lew, *my* job is to protect these children from evil. I leave the rest to you. It's a tremendous responsibility, so don't fail us, hm?"

The young woman sporting sheep horns casually pawned her job

off on Lew with a big smile on her face. Leila was pretty slick when it came to stuff like this. Then again, maybe it was more accurate to say she always knew how to hold her own and get her way.

“Miss Lew! Good luck!”

“It’s gonna be a tough battle, so don’t die, okay?!”

“A-All right, I get it. I’ll be the hero you all need: a researcher of justice who fights villains! Prepare yourselves, researchers of evil!”

Jumping on the bandwagon, Lew posed energetically, just like a hero would. *Too cute.*



“Whaaat?! Researchers of justice?! Boo! Commander En, what say you?!”

“Hm... We must stain the world with evil. Eliminate her.”

“Geh heh heh! I expected no less from our leader! Roger that, Commander! You heard her, Assistant Lefi! The fate of the world rests on this battle! Victory will ensure that our leader’s name is known far and wide throughout these lands!”

“Keh keh keh! My blood boils with excitement imagining your cries and screams when I experiment on you! By the way, Yuki, I must say, the role of underling suits you quite well.”

Ignore her, man. Just ignore her.

It should be noted that just as the fierce battle between good and evil reached its climax, a truce was called by both sides as it was snack time. Once all parties had agreed to the ceasefire, the war summarily ended.

Chapter 1: The Distance Between Them

“Yuki, let us go on a date.”

“Sure. Wait, what? C-Could you repeat that for me?”

I had absentmindedly agreed to Lefi’s sudden suggestion, then rushed to confirm what she’d said once her words actually filtered through my brain.

“Do not tell me you assented without actually listening to me. In any case, a date. I wish to go on a date. You and I are going on a date.”

“Uhhh, s-sure? I-I’m good with that...”

A-A date? She wants to go on a date? Wait, okay, dial it back, dumbass.

She was cool as a cucumber—her feathers were totally unruffled. I had to stay calm too or else I’d look like the lone idiot looking forward to our date. If she found out, I knew for a fact that her ego would inflate like a balloon. I could just *imagine* the look on her face, and it was pissing me off. Hard pass on that.

Breathe in, breathe out. I needed to regain my composure. Easy enough.

“So, um, where do you wanna go?”

I looked calm and collected on the surface as I asked her that question, doing my best to hide how excited I was.

“Hm. I was considering crossing the nearby mountain to visit the one next to it.”

“Wow. A mountain, huh? I do enjoy mountain climbing. Definitely an underrated hobby.”

“Whatever are you on about, Yuki? We will not be climbing to our destination, but flying.”

Oh, right, that makes more sense. Now that I actually thought about it, we *did* have wings. Which made this an...aerial date? Worked for me. I was into that, so it was all gucci.

“Time out. We have a destination?”

“Indeed. There is a beehive deep within the neighboring mountain. I have some business there.”

Huh? Really?

“A honeycomb?”

“Correct. I realized I have not enjoyed that mountain’s honey in

quite some time, so I would very much like to harvest it. Then, I plan to give it to Leila and have her make a scrumptious dessert or three with it.”

I didn’t say a word.

“All of the sweets you produce are extremely delicious. However, that honey is incredibly delectable as well. I find myself craving it with great ferocity as of late.”

She looked hopped up on bliss as she thought back to how the honey tasted. Seeing that expression on her face, I could feel my own instantly turn serious. *I should’ve known better.*

“There you have it, Yuki. Let us be off to the mountain.”

“...No.”

That was all I could say. My excitement had been smashed into a million pieces. Having said my piece, I rolled over, turning away from her.

“P-Pardon?! Whyever not?!”

I could hear the shock and agitation in her voice. Her Majesty must not’ve expected me to refuse. Lefi moved around my body to face me head-on, but I wasn’t having it. I rolled back over to keep myself from looking at her.

“Cause I’ve got zero interest in beehives.”

“O-Oh, come now! Does it mean nothing to you that I find the honey there to be the most delicious foodstuff in this world?! I am certain you will also find it to your liking!”

She capped off her declaration by climbing on top of me so she could look me dead in the eyes from up close. Too bad for her, I put the kibosh on that by turning my head.

“You should know by now that I don’t have much of a sweet tooth.”

“Gah. That slipped my mind, so I will grant you a point. B-But even so, your dearly beloved companion hungers deeply for the honey across the way. Is it not the way of things for one half of a duo to grant the other’s wish?”

Did this asshole really just call herself my “dearly beloved”? And what the hell’s with the “duo” crap? We some sort of double act now?

“Except there’s no upside for me, so no thanks.”

“Th-Then how about...um... I-I shall sleep by your side should you accompany me!”

“Again, what’s the upside for me? It’s not like I get anything good out of you sleeping next to me.”

“Bwaaah?!”

Out of the corner of my eye, I’d seen her face go red when she’d made her offer, but my stone-cold rejection had her screeching like a banshee while she stared down at me. I refused to look at her the

whole time, and that seemed to finally make her realize I had no desire whatsoever to move. The dragon girl groaned quietly.

“Here I thought we could finally be alone... Just the two of us...”

Lefi’s words came out quieter than a mouse, but my ears picked them up anyway.

You’ve gotta be kidding me. Was that the reason she’d invited me in the first place? She really should’ve picked her words more careful—oh, right, my bad. I forgot about her social awkwardness.

“Maaan...”

I let out a small sigh, then sat up. Our new position shifted her just enough that she now straddled my thighs. It also happened to bring our faces nice and close.

“Hwyeh?!”

“Fine. Have it your way. I’ll go, but on one condition: you’re gonna be my body pillow next time we sleep. Deal?”

My sudden movement made her yelp a little in surprise. I just grinned and shrugged my shoulders.

“Y-Your body pillow... Ahem. I-I suppose that is acceptable. As I am a generous person, I shall grant you this boon.”

Now *she* was the one desperately trying to keep up the not-freaking-out look. I knew better, though, because of her tells. Her small twitches and slightly swishing tail gave her away. With a laugh, I grabbed her hand and tugged her up as I got to my feet.



The warm sun beat down on us. A comforting breeze stroked our cheeks and wound its way past our shoulders, leaving us behind as we flew forward. When we looked down, all we could see was vast, endless stretches of nature below us. Sunlight reflected off the surface of a shimmering blue lake. The wind rustled through wildflowers in meadows, and a river rushed thunderously through a deep ravine. Unspoiled beauty was all around us.

Until Lefi had decided to shut herself away in my dungeon, this region had been part of her territory. During that time, I’d hardly ever seen a living creature in these parts. For the past few months, though—after she’d lost interest in this place—it seemed life had found its way back. On the lakeshore, I could see deerlike animals drinking water. Horses and other creatures relaxed in the wide plains. There was stuff going on all over the natural realm below us. Everything blended together so harmoniously that it felt like I was gazing upon an otherworldly painting. The scene made my eyes burn with emotion.

I’d said it before, but I had to say it again: soaring through the sky really was an indescribable pleasure. Icarus’s boundless yearning to fly

that led him to construct wings out of feathers and wax. The Wright brothers' extraordinary zeal to glide through the heavens. Having experienced the rush of flight for some time now, I totally got why they felt that way. I suspected that airplane and helicopter pilots back on Earth had the same inexpressible sentiments toward the everlasting horizons of the sky.

Overcome by the pleasure of flying, I glanced at Lefi, who was next to me. Her beautiful silver wings flapped, her similarly colored hair glittering as it fluttered behind her. Only in flight was her form truly magnificent. So much so that it was always hard for me to believe it was the same lazy, no-good dragon I knew all too well. She moved so gracefully that she unintentionally sucked me in every time. *Might have been worth it to tag along just to see her like this.*

"Hm? Why are you staring so intently at me, Yuki? Perhaps you have unwittingly fallen in love with me?"

"Yeah, yeah. Caught me red-handed. You're just so beautiful, I couldn't help it."

"What? Oh, I-I see... Well, then..."

Hey, you started it. But I sure didn't need her blushing like that. It'd make me lose my mind.

"Ahem. Anyway, uh, you said the mountain next door, but where exactly are we headed?"

I tried to play off the moment with that question. Lefi jumped at the chance, doing the same with her response.

"R-Right, yes. It is in sight. Over there."

Looking where she was pointing, I saw a mountain that stood above all the others in this huge mountain range. Even after piercing through the clouds it just kept going. Despite being in the air, I couldn't spot its peak. During my time in the Demonic Forest, I'd spotted that mountain every now and then through the shroud of trees, but seeing it at a much closer range really drove home how massive the thing was.

"In the past, I resided on its summit."

"Whoa... I kinda wanna see it now. How 'bout a tour of the old stomping grounds?"

"Even though there is nothing there? You will find only bare rock."

I chuckled at Lefi's confused tone.

"I don't care. I still wanna see your old home."

"As you wish, then. I will guide you, so do not fall behind. Understood?"

"Hey, wait!"

Color staining her cheeks for some strange reason, Lefi quickly sped up, leaving me hurrying after her.

“Haah... Haah... Are we finally here?”

I huffed out my question, trying to catch my breath. True to her word, Lefi had led the way straight through the clouds to a rocky area near the mountain’s summit. From up here, all I could see was the endless blue sky above us and a puffy carpet of clouds below. Only every once in a while could I spy the ground, and it was waaay down between the gaps in the clouds. *I wonder if this is what the view from Heaven is like.*

“What? Exhausted already, Yuki?”

“No shit...Sherlock... The air...is so thin...up here...”

I panted heavily as I replied to Lefi. She seemed genuinely surprised by the shape I was in. At this elevation, the air really was incredibly thin. It was the first time I’d ever been this high up, and my body’s desperate need for oxygen was proof of that.

I had to wonder how in the Sam Hill Lefi could act so nonchalant. Was her physical makeup so fundamentally different because her race made the sky their domain? That had to be it. *Damn, I’m so jelly. I would love to have a body perfectly adapted to the sky.*

Hold that thought. I could feel my demon lord body acclimating itself to this altitude bit by bit. Hell yeah. My breathing was evening out the longer we stayed up here. I couldn’t help thinking that the next time I evolved, I wanted a body that could easily withstand being at such a high elevation.

“So this is where you used to live, huh?”

I muttered softly while surveying our surroundings. Lefi, who was standing next to me, shrugged her shoulders in response.

“Did I not tell you there is nothing of note here?”

One entire section of this area was just bare, brown rock. Huge boulders, almost as big as Lefi in her dragon form, were scattered around everywhere else. They were definitely neat because of how big they were, but as far as anything interesting went, I guess it would have to be the super bleak vibe. But...

“I’m still glad I came here.”

It was obvious that Lefi had built her nest so that it would be easy for her to live in. There was a ginormous, perfectly level rock that had probably been a makeshift table, and another colossal boulder was gouged out with a hollow that would have snugly held dragon-form Lefi. *I wonder if that’s supposed to be her bedroom.*

On closer inspection, I saw silver scales and sharp fangs littering the ground. Those things would make it clear to any would-be trespassers that this place was hers. Even now, those parts of her hadn’t lost their luster, sparkling under the sunlight.

Traces of Lefi’s life here lingered all around us. I was incredibly

moved to be able to see it all. A mystifying emotion I couldn't describe welled up deep within my heart.

"Is that so?"

I could only nod and murmur softly at her curious question.

"Yeah."

"Heh heh. I see."

Lefi's reply was brief. Then, with a small smile and a quiet *thump*, she rested her head on my arm.

After that, I looked around Lefi's former abode some more before she showed me to a spot further down on a steep slope. It was absolutely nothing like the flat-ass summit. There, I noticed certain *items*.

"Uhhh... Beg your pardon, Miss Lefi, but what are these?"

"Hm? Oh, those. They are remnants of the imbeciles who scaled the mountain intending to challenge me."

A bunch of weapons and armor were lying around all over the place. Most of the stuff was extremely weathered, but I saw a few sharp swords and spears, their shining silver blades still glinting beautifully. None of the armor was human-sized, so I figured it must have belonged to some race of giants. *All this equipment, but I don't see their owners' bones. Ashes to ashes, dust to dust, eh?* That was the only explanation I could come up with.

"Damn. You had to deal with a *shitload* of morons."

Just looking over the equipment graveyard was enough to tell me there'd been hundreds of them. I didn't even have to count to be sure of my guesstimate. In short, those hundreds had gone to all the effort of huffing and puffing their way to this virtually airless peak, sweat pouring down their bodies, just for it all to go to waste when Lefi killed them as soon as they got here.

"For a time, baseless rumors circulated in both the human and demon realms regarding alleged properties of my body. They claimed, for example, that if an individual partook of my blood, they would be granted not only immortality, but invincibility as well. Naturally, that meant raiders from across the world would enter my territory for the purpose of attacking me. It was an extraordinarily aggravating era in my life."

Lefi growled angrily. Those memories really got her worked up, it seemed.

Well, the blood-drinking thing was most likely bogus as hell, but I could definitely see the potential to create the strongest weapon in history out of her scales and fangs. Still, though, I had to admit that I could see why rumors would spread about eating her flesh. Even on Earth, there'd been no shortage of mysterious legends like that. Like

the ones about how if someone ate a part of a mermaid or kappa or tengu or whatever, they would become immortal. The curse of being legendary transcended worlds, apparently.

“You may have all of it if you would like, Yuki.”

“Huh? Are you sure?”

“None of it was ever mine. And as far as I am concerned, I have always considered it rubbish, thus I abandoned it here. I do believe there is a good number of fine swords in the bunch. That being said, not a single weapon was ever capable of piercing my scales!”

I smiled wryly at her proud expression.

“Don’t mind if I do, then.”

“Take as much as would please you.”

I doubted there’d be anything useful here since I had En, but anything that looked like the legendary gear that showed up toward the end of every RPG ever made would make a good frame of reference for any future smithing projects. The rest would get converted to DP once I was back home.

I’d gotten way more treasure than anticipated from the bandit extermination, so fingers crossed that cashing this stash in for DP would net me some sweet gains too. Maybe even enough to move up the timeline on summoning my four new followers. *Oh yeah, it’s all coming together.*

If I shipped these goods off to museums, I had no doubt they’d be on display for all eternity as priceless relics. Too bad for them, I was a demon lord wholly devoted to my own self-interests. I gave zero shits about historical value; if it had a sticker price, it was being sold off for DP, no ifs, ands, or buts about it. Anyone who had an issue with that could take it up with the ding-dongs who’d so arrogantly strutted their way up here armed but not nearly as dangerous as they’d thought they were. Or they could kiss my ass. Either way, not my problem.

“Oh, right. Question for you, Lefi.”

“What is it?”

“Over there, um...your scales and fangs. Can I take those too?”

“Hm? I do not particularly mind if you do.”

Her puzzled look told me that she wanted to know what I planned on using them for. Idly scratching my cheek, I answered the question she didn’t actually ask me.

“For a long time now, I’ve been thinking about making daggers for Iluna and the others. For self-defense, y’know? So I figured that if I used pieces of you, I could make something incredibly powerful that would definitely protect them. Plus, I, uh...also want them for myself.”

Not to mention that I had a feeling I could design the most powerful amulet ever with her scales. That aside, I crept myself out by wanting a part of someone else’s body, hence my inarticulate,

mumbled word salad. Lefi seemed a bit embarrassed to have heard it too.

“I-I see... Hm... W-Well, in that case, of course. You may certainly take them. My scales, tougher than divine iron and steel, and my fangs, the only things capable of piercing those very scales. It is a given that you will be able to create fearsome weapons from these pieces of me, so take it all if you wish. To the person I am now, these castoffs are naught but waste.”

“Great, thanks! I’ll definitely make something amazing, so just wait and see!”

My brain was working a mile a minute now. There were so many possibilities. I figured I might as well fuse a few of these legendary-looking things with her scales and fangs to test what I could come up with. To be clear, I had no intention whatsoever of using anything but En as my primary weapon, but I didn’t think she’d be sad if I forged a dagger or shortsword to keep as a backup.

On top of that, with this many materials, I could make matching daggers for every single person in our dungeon family, Lefi included. And each would be the world’s strongest dagger. I was getting hyped just thinking about it.

I didn’t even bother hiding my excitement at this point. Once I thanked her for giving me the go-ahead, I opened Inventory and started tossing everything—armor, weapons, Lefi’s scales and fangs—inside. Said silver-haired dragon girl, who was watching over me from a few steps behind, seemed a little surprised. Despite that, though, I caught glimpses of gentleness in her eyes.



Still feeling giddy over my unexpected discovery of such high-quality materials, I’d finished exploring Lefi’s former home. With our business there done, we’d gotten back to our original goal for this trip: hunting the fabled beehive.

“So whereabouts is this honey of yours, Lefi?”

“Well, as I am wont to damage it in my zeal, the hive’s location changes with each of my visits. It is quite unique, however, so we will be able to identify it immediately upon seeing it.”

Dang, okay. Guess I had no choice but to let her lead the way since I didn’t know this particular area. Not to mention that I had no clue how bees behaved, so it wasn’t like I could track them or guess at where they were. All good, though, because thanks to Lefi, I’d managed to get my hands on some really good stuff. The least I could do was fire myself up to help her harvest some honey.

“Aight, let’s git ’er done!”

“Oh ho, your newfound enthusiasm pleases me.”

“Yeeeah. Figured this would be a good way to return the favor for all the stuff you let me have. I’m gonna gather the shit outta that honey.”

“Hah hah! I shall rely on you, then. Now, let me see. Hmm... Ah, there it is.”

“Wait, what? You already found it?”

We were currently gliding through the air after leaving Lefi’s old nest. I followed behind her once she spotted her target, which just so happened to be at the bottom of a cliff deep in this mountain range. There, I saw what I’d call a pond since it wasn’t quite big enough to be called a lake. For reasons I sure as hell didn’t understand, the water was a sparkly golden color and gave off a sweet scent. It smelled like...

“Yes. This is the place—the honey pond.”

Lefi nodded happily, sniffing the sweet air.

“Uhhh, isn’t honey harvested from beehives?”

The pond definitely smelled like what you put on pancakes and stuff. Apparently, in another world, honey came from ponds. Would wonders never cease?

“Indeed, you are correct. When bees find a suitable location for their hive, they construct a pond in the vicinity to amass their honey. That is what you see before you.”

So the bees in this world work their asses off to build these crazy impressive hives, do they? Wack.

Pause. The hole carved in the ground for the pond was pretty damn big. There was a *lot* of honey in it too, so just how massive were these friggin’ bees? I looked around for any sign of the things or their hive, but no dice.

“Um, Miss Lefi? Where might the owners of this pond be?”

Lefi must’ve heard the fear in my voice because she grinned wickedly up at me in response.

“As I said, Yuki, I shall rely on you.”

The second she repeated what she’d said earlier, the buzzing of countless wings rushed to my ears. They came from seemingly out of nowhere, and that was when Scout finally reacted, warning me of an incredible amount of enmity directed our way. I jerked my head toward the direction of the incoming threat and saw bees a whole lot bigger than the ones I’d been imagining. We’re talking the size of huge motorcycles, like cruisers or touring bikes. Honestly, it was almost ridiculous how big they were. The stingers on their tail ends may as well have been lances.

The big-ass bees swarmed out aggressively from a colossal cave located halfway up the cliff.

“Hey, no, wait, I— Whaaat?!”

This unforeseen development broke my brain; I couldn’t actually

form a proper sentence. At least I knew that the hive was that opening up on the cliff wall, I guess? The bees were zooming out in such large numbers that I really wanted to know how big it was in there. Reminded me of that gag where an endless line of clowns trudges out of a tiny car. Anyway, the bees were clearly not happy. They raced right toward us, every last one of them giving off murderous vibes.

“Right, then. Yuki, I expect that you will handle them whilst I harvest their honey.”

“Y-You little— Are you *kidding* me?!”

Lefi was completely relaxed as she gave me that command. She used soil to make a glass jar and started cheerfully filling it up with honey. Meanwhile, I opened Inventory as fast as I could and took out my En, the sword I loved so much.

“Nh... Is it my turn?”

“Yup! Gonna need you to use all your firepower here, please!”

I drew up my magic and pushed it into her to activate her sorcerous circuit. Although En now had her own distinct sense of self, our fighting style hadn’t really changed. The one and only difference was that since En had started thinking for herself, she’d essentially become an assistant of sorts to me. With her taking the initiative in that sense, the sorcerous circuit known as Crimson Flame had evolved into a legitimate ability of hers. Thanks to that change, the time between me using my magic to get it going and it activating had gotten a lot shorter.

On top of that, now that she was a magical entity in her own right, I could keep Crimson Flame activated without needing to pump in extra magic. Five minutes seemed to be the current max, but it was still amazing progress. My control over the flames themselves had improved a lot because of her changed nature too, and because it was easier for me to control the flames, I also had a ton more range on them than I used to.

Info dump out of the way, let’s get back to the situation at hand. Tightly gripping En’s hilt, I swung at the first of the bastards to get close, cleaving its torso in half. When I did, the thing burst into flames. The blaze swallowed up the nearby bees, setting them on fire too.

Whoosh. The air temperature skyrocketed, and I could feel the heat of the inferno blanketing my entire body. It twisted and roared like a tornado, overtaking the bees and dropping them one after another, littering the ground with their charred corpses. Outstanding results, if I did say so myself. Bug-types were destined to lose against fire-types, even in different worlds.

“Phew. Bah ha ha! You may have caught me off guard with your numbers, but you still chose the wrong guy— Gwaaah! What the

hell?!”

A bee had somehow managed to avoid the blaze. I screamed when it almost stabbed me with its extended stinger, but my reflexes were just too good. I'd managed to shove En between us, blocking its attack before swiftly lopping its head off and launching away. *Okay, so that was a bit of an unfortunate surprise. Nothing I can't handle, though.*

“Oh, do be careful around their stingers. They are exceedingly sharp, you see. Not only can they pierce through iron, but they also contain a deadly poison. At your current level, a slight graze would kill you in no more than five minutes.”

“You should've told me that way before now, goddammit!”

And here I was starting to get cocky because I thought we could make this work! B-But me and En's firestorm should have made a nice dent in their num—or not?!

While Lefi and I were having our short little chat, a group of bees rushed out from within the fiery vortex. The horde was alive and kicking, apparently. They also seemed to have decided that I was their lone attacker, making me the target of their next onslaught. Not a single one so much as glanced Lefi's way as they buzzed toward me at high speed.

Utterly grossed out by the swarm of creepy-crawlies heading my way, I couldn't stop goosebumps from erupting all over my skin. I still went hard using Crimson Flame to counter them, though.

“Ngh! Son of a bitch!”

“Well, well. It seems all those occasions on which I destroyed their hive in search of honey were useful in teaching them how to think. They have certainly gained a substantial amount of intellect since our last meeting. That aside, I am truly thankful for your presence, Yuki. In the past, I was required to spend great lengths of time routing them and forcing them to flee instead of annihilating them outright, only stealing their honey once I had accomplished that. I did not want to risk the loss of the honey by exterminating them—you understand. Your help, however, has made gathering it an effortless task.”

“Jesus fucking Christ! That explains why their teamwork is so good! It's because of *your* stupid ass! I hate you so much right now!”

Their attacks came in intervals. They'd surrounded me, blocking off any escape path I might've had, and were charging me one at a time from behind their comrades. They were like a group of assassins, always on the lookout for the opportunity to strike. And then there was the fact that their actions were perfectly coordinated. For example, even if one died, they didn't adjust their strategy even a little bit. Maybe that was because they lived as a group, with each bee playing its role for the benefit of the hive.

Just like Lefi had said, these things were highly intelligent. It

almost seemed like they were one collective creature. Honestly, they were the kind of enemy nobody wanted to have to fight. Never mind that being crushed in by insects this huge freaked me out to no end. My body was practically one giant goose bump.

Shit, shit, shit! This was only gonna make me hate bugs even more. At this rate, I'd definitely turn into Absolute Insect-Murder Man.

"Heh heh! Yuki, my partner, I entrust their defeat to you!"

"Stop trying to butter me up, asshole! You only call me your partner when you're getting something out of it!"

"Be sure to take this scuffle a bit further away, would you? I do not want any foreign matter falling into the honey as a result of your battle."

"The honey is *still* your top priority?! Are you for real right now?!"

Crap on a cracker! I kinda wished I'd never said I'd put in work for her sake. If I could've gone back in time to just a few minutes ago, I'd have kicked my own shit-for-brains ass! And Lefi had better've been preparing to enter a world of hurt when we got back home!

I was all over the place fighting these godforsaken bees. Rolling around on the ground, dashing here and there, flying through the air—I used my entire body to defend myself and one useless dragon girl. As things stood, despite the dozens of bee corpses scattered around me, there were several times more than that still in the air, lunging at me nonstop.

"Helloooo! Miss Lefi! Pardon the interruption, but can we get a move on already?! *Please* tell me you're done collecting your honey!"

"A bit more. Just a bit more... Mmm! This honey is indeed the most delectable thing I have ever had the pleasure of tasting."



“Are you *kidding* me?! Have you seriously just been eating it this whole time?! Well, it’s time to wrap it up and help me, you jerk!”

“Oh ho, are you quite certain you wish to phrase your request in that fashion? If you do not take a more reverent tone with me, perhaps I shall gather this honey even *more* leisurely.”

“Begging your pardon, Your Majesty! O lovely, ethereal Lady Lefi! Won’t you reveal your tremendous power to save this cowardly soldier?!”

“No. I find that repulsive for some reason.”

“I’m gonna murder you in your goddamn sleep, woman!”

Lefi watched me fight my losing battle, an amused smile on her face the entire time. Finally, freaking *finally*, she pushed herself up off the ground, shaking her head in exasperation. That pissed me right the hell off, but I knew she’d abandon me in a heartbeat if I said anything snippy. Instead, I clamped my jaw tight and ground my teeth in rage, stopping any not-so-nice words from slipping out.

“Clearly, you leave me no choice. Since you are ever so helpless without me, I will generously display a small portion of the Supreme Dragon’s might especially for you.”

“Whatever, just hop to it already!”

At my shout, Her Majesty The Supreme Dragon flashed me a fearless grin, then opened her mouth wide.

“Grrrraaawr!”

She fired a beam. By the time I’d realized that a vast amount of magical energy had gathered in her mouth, she was already blasting it at the bees. It was insanely huge and powerful—way stronger than Ultraguy’s Cosmium Beam. I unconsciously covered my ears because of the thunderous boom, and the wind gust it created hammered my body, making my clothes flutter violently.

The bees that took a direct hit from the beam had been erased from existence. Not even a trace of burnt charcoal, so to speak, was left of them. Also, the cliff behind the bees had a big hole in it now. Her attack had gone so far through the rock that I could see blue sky all the way on the other side.

And then, there were the other bees. They hadn’t taken a direct hit from her death ray, but the aftershocks had been more than powerful enough to slam them into the ground. The big, dumb insects shook like chihuahuas before they stopped moving entirely. It blew my mind that her beam could produce shock waves like that. Granted, I didn’t think every single bee had been exterminated, but thanks to Lefi’s one-shot kill, she and I were the only things in the area that were able to move properly.

“Heh heh heh. What say you, Yuki? You just witnessed

dragonkind's most powerful attack, the Dragon Roar!"

She bragged about herself with an incredibly smug expression. Meanwhile, mine turned serious as I surveyed the disaster around us before replying to her.

"I totally understand that your attack is incredible, Lefi, but..."

"What is it? Speak."

"If you'd just used that at the start of all this, I wouldn't've had to fight so hard. Plus, you can obviously control it seeing as you didn't exterminate every last bee. If you had, you wouldn't be able to get those grubby little hands on their honey again, right?"

"Well, you are not wrong. I simply wanted to make you suffer a bit as penance for how coldly you initially refused my invitation."

"I knew it! I knew you still had a grudge against me!"

That shout came from the depths of my soul, and my words echoed endlessly across the blue sky.

"Nh— Ah... Gh. Nghh!"

Her heated gasps sounded seductive to me, the soft puffs of air tickling my earlobe.

"Y-Yuki, I-I am sorry— Mpf! F-Forgive me. I am sorry, s-so won't you m-move your hand? P-Please."

"Ahhh... This is the best body pillow I've ever had."

"Y-Yuki? Are you listening to me? Hrnh— P-Please, if you are listening...sh-show me a sign you can hear me."

"I'm deaf, so I ain't showing you squat."

"Yuki?!"

Lefi's cheeks were scarlet and her eyes teary as she pleaded with me. I ignored her and kept trailing my fingers across her wings, enjoying their unbelievable texture to the fullest. I even buried my face in them to enhance my experience.

It was nighttime now, hours after our honey-hunting ordeal had ended. A while ago, I had very casually tricked her into producing her wings by telling her I'd groom them for her as a special treat. The second she did, I hugged her like the body pillow she promised she'd be, sending both of us tumbling onto my futon. Since then, I'd been messing with her wings to my heart's content.

I couldn't comment on her dragon-form wings, but I knew enough about both her human-form wings and my own from personal experience. Because our wings were made from magic, we could easily bring them in and out whenever we wanted—except when others touched them. If our wings were being stroked by someone else's hands, the sensation was so massively pleasurable that it became difficult to put them away.

Despite being made of magic, they were not only receptive to

touch, but seemed to function as bodily organs too. While they were out, they were pretty much like extra arms and legs. That was why, as I satisfied myself by feasting my hands on her wings, Lefi couldn't make them disappear no matter how badly she wanted to.

"All righty, what's next on the menu for me? Oh, this tail feels really nice too. What an intriguing texture."

"Ohhh! D-Don't rub my taaail...!"

"Got it. Back to the wings, then?"

"Eep! Th-That is even worse!"

Lefi latched on to my arm, wordlessly begging me to stop. Her body wasn't putting up even a hint of resistance, though, which was most likely due to the fact that I was touching both her overly sensitive wings *and* tail at the same time. She barely had enough sanity to give even the weakest protest. Trying to actually fight her way out of my hold was beyond her at this point and she knew it.

Geh heh heh. You foolish dragon. This was her just desserts—pun fully intended—for trying to set me up like that earlier. As Mitsunari Ishida once said, "Righteousness is on my side." And just like that, I made sure to get my fill of the most excellent Lefi body pillow right up until I fell asleep. Naturally, I totally ignored her tears and the heat of her body, which were direct consequences of my touching.

Oh, yeah, and the honey she'd harvested really *was* super tasty.



"I-It is your fault I could not sleep a wink yesterday! Even in your slumber, you would not cease your stroking of my wings!"

"I think I know why. Your wings just feel so amazing that nobody would ever want to let go, even when they're asleep. So, really, you should be *happy* you have such great wings. Ooh, yeah, I like that. Final answer, Regis."

"Mrgh! H-How dare you try to pull the wool over my eyes with such flimsy reasoning?!"

"Yukiki, Lady Lefifi... Boo, you guys aren't listening. Miss Leila! We're going outside to play, okay?!"

"We be back!"

"EnEn, you're coming with us too!"

"Okay... We'll be back."

Prodded by Iluna, En, our newest dungeon resident, spoke expressionlessly. Leila smiled cheerfully at the little girls as she replied.

"Heh heh. Understood. Have fun, girls. See you back here soon. And remember, you mustn't venture beyond the meadow."

Iluna and Shii responded energetically and En gave her a small nod before the trio left through the door connecting the real throne

room to the meadow.

“Wooww...”

“Hee hee. Yukiki’s castle sure is amazing, huh?!”

When they stepped outside, they had a perfect vantage point for a sweeping view of the demon lord’s castle. As she looked up at it, a hint of wonder tinged En’s mostly expressionless face. Watching her, Iluna nodded proudly.

The aim of their visit to the meadow area was to introduce En to the castle now that she had a body that allowed her to move freely. Yuki had asked Iluna some time ago to be her guide; he wanted her to show En around the different places within the dungeon. Because Iluna considered herself the most mature among the group of young ladies, she couldn’t very well refuse his request.

Since Yuki had mentioned that he planned on staying in the dungeon for the day, it was the perfect opportunity for her to guide En around the meadow area. Standing next to the enthralled, silent little girl, Iluna had to crane her neck to the point it hurt just to spy the very top of the humongous castle before them. Once more, she couldn’t help but think that the person she adored and idolized as her big brother was truly a remarkable character. He had had to be in order to have built this castle, which looked as if it had been pulled right out of a fairy tale, in one day.

Iluna also loved the sweets-crazy girl who had helped him with that herculean task. The two of them were a bit different from most other people. Young as she was, even Iluna intuitively understood that basic reality, which included their sometimes bizarre behavior. She frequently had the thought that they were two peas in a pod.

This morning, she had been a bit jealous of their closeness, watching them share a futon as they slept in late. But once they’d woken up, for some strange reason, they’d immediately started arguing. If they were going to sleep in the same futon, Iluna thought it best that they should act like her mother and father had, always smiling and sneaking glances at each other. Their odd behavior perturbed her so much that she had asked the two young maids about it. Miss Leila, who was an incredibly knowledgeable and kind person, and the slightly scatterbrained, overly energetic Miss Lew, who nevertheless made sure they had lots of fun whenever she played with them, had responded thusly:

“That’s just the way they express their intimacy, you see.”

“Leila’s right! Love comes in all shapes and sizes!”

Iluna still didn’t fully understand what they meant, but she knew by looking at Yukiki and Lady Lefifi that they actually got along extremely well, so she would leave it be. They were happy in their

own peculiar ways, and that was good enough for her.

While Iluna pondered over her beloved elder siblings, Shii stood on En's other side, effectively sandwiching the dungeon's newest resident between two of its earliest. Turning her head to the side like she noticed something, she raised her voice.

"Oh! Rei! Rui! Roh!"

Hearing her almost-twin speak, Iluna turned in the same direction. There, she saw three little girls who looked even younger than her. Possessed of translucent bodies, they floated and bounced in the air. They were triplets from a race called wraiths, and just like Shii, they had been born after her big brother had used his mysterious power to create them. The first time she'd met them, she'd yelled "Ghosts?!" in surprise. They were all sweet, good little girls, however, and they always played with her and Shii whenever they came to the meadow.

Even so, they loved to play tricks and startle people, making it very important to Iluna that she always remained alert when she was with them. She couldn't count how many times they had shocked her, then turned those incidents into impromptu games of tag. Incidentally, given that they were sisters, they closely resembled one another, so it was hard to tell them apart by their appearance. Fortunately, each had her own distinct personality.

Rei was quite responsible because she took her role as the oldest sister very seriously. She was also very intelligent. She acted as the peacekeeper of the trio, but she also frequently involved herself in the grand schemes her younger sisters cooked up, so mischief was definitely one of her fortes as well.

Second in line was Rui. Possessed of an unyielding spirit, she usually sported a proud expression, but she was also the most earnest among the three, which meant she was often rushing to catch up to the others when they were up to their tricks. There were even times when she herself would fall for their mischief.

Lastly, there was Roh, the youngest. Like En, she was somewhat absent-minded, yet she loved mischief the most out of the triplets. On occasion, she would play a prank so outrageous that it astounded even her sisters.

In short, though they looked alike, it was quite easy for Iluna to tell them apart because of their wildly different personalities.

On the topic of their birth order and unique natures, those facts seemed to always weigh on her big brother's mind. He couldn't understand how that was possible since he had summoned them at the same time. Meanwhile, Iluna couldn't understand why he continued to obsess over it since she didn't think it was a problem.

"EnEn, these are the wraith triplets. Meet Rei, Rui, and Roh! Girls, this is En! Let's all be friends, okay?!"

Although the wraith sisters couldn't speak, the dungeon residents knew them well enough by now to understand what they wanted to say. They crowded around the dungeon's newest inhabitant, bounding around with happy smiles as if saying, "Nice to meet you!"

"Yes... Nice to meet you too."

Perhaps understanding that they were welcoming her, En returned their greeting. Though her expression didn't change much, a smidgen of joy colored her voice.

"I was just telling EnEn about the castle! Why don't we all show her around together?"

At Iluna's question, the tiny triplets bobbed up and down like their answer was "Of course!" They lived freely within the castle grounds, so while Iluna had explored the castle on her own for a period of time, she knew by now that the sisters were much more familiar. After all, Yukiki expanded the castle on a daily basis.

Where once there had been nothing, the next day, she would find a new corridor or additional rooms. The number of buildings was also increasing, as was the number of places outside the castle walls. Empty spaces would suddenly be turned into pretty gardens, flower beds, or ponds. The rapid and frequent pace at which things changed made the castle feel like a maze that transformed itself every day. Iluna suspected that all those changes provided endless fun for the triplets, who were still very young.

Just when Iluna, Shii, and En were about to head inside the castle with the wraith sisters, tromping off merrily into parts known and unknown, Iluna's sharp eyes caught sight of Roh's small smile. *Uh-oh, she's up to something.* As soon as that thought popped into her head, the youngest triplet abruptly wound her way behind En. She whizzed her semitransparent body through En's stomach and popped her head out as if whooping, "Boo! Scared you!"

"Eek!"

"Ooh..."

Even though Iluna knew Roh was going to do something, she was still jolted by the suddenness of the little wraith girl's action. As for the "victim" of the "crime," En didn't seem particularly startled. She did let out a hum of interest at the never-before-seen sight of someone else passing through her body, though.

Despite her trick missing its mark, Roh's spirits weren't dampened in the slightest. She cheerfully zoomed out of En's body and headed toward the castle, but within moments, she began shifting in and out of the air, clearly attempting to run away from the rest of the group. The reason for her quick escape was simple: she knew the others would give chase.

"Roohh! How could you do that to me?! You stop right there!"

Miffed, Iluna raced after the perpetrator, who was now joined by her sisters Rei and Rui for some reason. The truth was, because of their translucent bodies, actually catching them would be physically impossible—not that any of the girls cared about a silly thing like that. Fun was all that mattered to them, not logic.

“Tee hee. EnEn, we go too?”

Shii and En had been left behind in the chaos. While the latter watched the scene play out unmoving, the former took her hand and invited her to join the others.

“What...should I do?”

“We just chase everyone! Don’t worry! It’s fun!”

“Hm... Okay.”

The two of them set off after the rest of the group as they ran inside the castle. Having forgotten the day’s original goal of giving En a tour of the castle, they poured all their energy into the spontaneous game of tag.



“Hey, you guuuys. It’s almost lunchti— Huh? You’re all alone, En? Where are the others?”

From her spot in a patch of grass, En turned around at the sound of that voice. She hadn’t heard the door placed in the courtyard open. The view from the other side of it mystified her, as it wasn’t the garden she was in but the dungeon’s main room. And the one who appeared in the door was a young man with black hair just like hers—her beloved master, whom she wished she could be with forever.

“We...are playing hide-and-seek.”

“Ah, okay, that makes sense. So the game is restricted to the courtyard?”

“Yes...”

Despite being a courtyard in the technical sense, Yuki had gone all out in creating it, building it much bigger than a normal one. Its great expanse was no real problem for little girls with energy to spare, though.

When it came to hide-and-seek, whenever the older girls played with the younger wraiths, the triplets would possess the dolls Yuki had gifted them. If they didn’t, their MO was to hide their semitransparent bodies in places like walls and trees where no one could find them.

“Dang, I’m jelly. That sounds like fun.”

En’s master said that with a laugh. Witnessing his expression, En’s heart gradually warmed.

“How are things? Think you’ll get along with everyone?”

“Yes... They’re all such nice girls.”

She accompanied her response with a small nod. En was very aware that conversing with others wasn't a strong point for her, but that didn't matter to the others. They accepted her quiet nature and had welcomed her into their fold. Their attitude made her wildly, embarrassingly happy.

"Oh, yeah? Glad to hear it."

Her master seemed incredibly pleased that she was already friends with the rest of the girls. He ruffled the kimono-clad girl's hair playfully in his exuberance. His large hand was a bit rough, but she still felt warmth emanating from it.

The comfort of his touch was an especially important sensation for En. Satisfied that she was doing well, Yuki pulled his palm away, but En wanted to experience more of that special feeling. She stretched out both of her hands, carefully grasped his, and pressed it once more to her head.

She had acted instinctively. When she realized what she'd done, she gasped in surprise, then released Yuki's hand in a panic. Myriad emotions whirled in her chest as she struggled with what to do next. Negative thoughts stormed her confused mind as she worried whether her action was disrespectful to or unpleasant for her master. It hadn't been long since her birth as a "her," which in itself was a new capacity of existence for En. That coupled with her life prior to Yuki meant that she still didn't know how to express sentiments like deep affection.

But she had no reason to worry, as Yuki huffed out a soft laugh. It charmed him to see the little girl so adorably flustered when her usual mode was expressionlessly staring off into space. He silently resumed petting her head.

En noticed her master's gentle smile and realized that he wasn't displeased at all. Now that she knew, the storm inside her mind steadily calmed. She lowered the arms she'd raised unthinkingly and quietly let her head be stroked like a wild cat that had suddenly turned meek. And so, they passed the time like that in an easy, tranquil silence.

After a while, blushing from equal parts joy and shyness as she got her fill of her master's touch, En heard a voice from across the courtyard.

"Ah ha! I finally found you, EnEn! Wait a sec—it's Yukiki!"

When En turned to see the other girl, she figured out that she was the last one left to be found in their game of hide-and-seek. Iluna, who was "it" this round, strolled toward her. Trailing after her were Shii and the wraith sisters, the triplets springing around in the air while possessing their dolls. Catching sight of Yuki, they started shifting rapidly through the air, reaching him before the others. Their

uncontrollable delight at his presence drove them to spin in crazy circles around him.

“Oh, whoa! Ha ha! Glad to see you three are just as hyper as ever.”

Yuki lifted his hand from En’s head to play with the triplets.

“Ah...”

She unconsciously let out a sad sound. When it drew the sisters’ gazes—as well as Yuki’s—to her, she hurriedly clapped her hands over her mouth. In that moment, though, the triplets exchanged knowing glances with each other. Then, with determined nods, they suddenly flew to En’s side, pushing at her back and urging her toward Yuki.

“Ah. Huh? Um...”

Having figured out what they were up to, Yuki grinned. He crouched down a little, wrapped his arms around En’s thighs, and stood up, holding her in his arms.

“Ah. What? M-Master...”

“All right, ladies, soup’s on. You can play some more after lunch. Rei, Rui, Roh, you three come inside too. I know you can’t eat, but it’s tons more fun just being with everyone, right?”

Iluna and Shii replied energetically. The wraith sisters did the same, except they each raised one hand from their respective dolls since they couldn’t talk. Yuki nodded back at them, satisfied by their responses. With En still perched on his arm, he strode toward a nearby bench that held her true body, the sword. He picked it up with his free hand, then headed back to the door connecting to the real throne room.

“Tee hee! I’m so happy for you, EnEn!”

Walking next to Yuki, Iluna beamed up at En as he carried her.

“Me...too.”

For whatever reason, En felt intensely embarrassed to be seen in her current position. With a small nod at Iluna, she hid her face shyly in the nape of Yuki’s neck.

Chapter 2: Dignity

Everything happened without warning. As usual, I was sitting across from Lefi, relaxing in the real throne room. Then, she suddenly made a muffled sound deep in her throat and stood up, her attention focused on the door connecting to the outside.

“Huh? What’s wro—”

Confused, I tried to ask a question. Before I could even finish it, though, Maps opened automatically. We had an intruder. I immediately zeroed in on the display to confirm the enemy’s details, my expression turning grim as I did. It was coming from...in the air.

“Shit, it’s...”

“This presence... I suspect it is an acquaintance of mine.”

Lefi murmured her response, her body still turned toward the door.

“Yeah. I think you’re right.”

When I glanced up at her, I saw that she had the same look on her face as I did, so I seriously doubted this was just an acquaintance. Whoever it was, she clearly wasn’t a fan.

“Stay here. I do not know why he has come, but I am most certainly his target. Whatever his reason, I will ensure that the matter is settled.”

Just as Lefi headed out the door, I stood up myself and grasped her shoulders, stopping her.

“Wait. I’m coming with you.”

“No. He thinks highly of himself and looks down on others incessantly. He is the sort who would challenge even me, so I do not want you to be put in danger.”

“All the more reason for me to tag along. No way in hell am I letting you go meet somebody so dangerous by yourself.”

He must’ve been a massive pain in the ass if this was Lefi’s reaction to him showing up. Fortunately, though, on the off chance that shit went sideways and we ended up brawling, I knew she could take him. The off-the-charts power difference between me and her hadn’t changed at all, so I didn’t have to worry on that front.

Still, it wasn’t like I’d leave her to handle everything while I lazed around in here. This was *my* dungeon, after all. This was *my* world, and it was *my* responsibility to protect it. Besides, the fact that the dungeon being destroyed meant I’d go kaput too didn’t have a damn

thing to do with my decision. Nope, not at all.

“Stop spouting nonsense. Have you forgotten that I am the Supreme Dragon? You have no reason whatsoever to worry.”

“I know, but I’m not changing my mind.”

I was just being stubborn at this point. No one knew better than me that Lefi was so strong she had no enemies in this world. But it didn’t matter. I didn’t want her to face something dangerous all alone. If I ended up causing more problems for her than I solved, I’d worry about that if or when the time came.

We stared each other down. Neither of us gave an inch for a while, but eventually, Lefi threw in the towel. She smiled wryly at me.

“Heh. Whatever will I do with you? Since you insist so obstinately, I expect you to protect me. Understood?”

“You know I will. I got your back, partner.”

Lefi laughed in exasperation when I flashed her a fearless grin.

I had En transform back into her weapon form before I made an announcement to everyone, including the wraith triplets. No one was to leave the dungeon until Lefi and I got back. With that job done, the two of us stepped through the door, walked out of the tunnel, and entered the Demonic Forest.

I carried En on my shoulder, unsheathed, and I felt her reacting to my tension with some of her own. But my beloved sword wasn’t the only heat I was packing. I had my magic pistol and dagger tucked away at my lower back, and several bottles of different types of health potions stuffed into a pouch wrapped around my thigh. This was how I prepared myself for fights outside now. That creepy-ass manticore had taught me that I wasn’t always gonna have time to pull stuff out of Inventory, which was why I had them at the ready. Like hell was I ever gonna make that mistake again.

As far as Lefi went, she was her usual self. She hadn’t made any preparations, which made a lot of sense considering that her body was practically a nuclear weapon.

Now that we were in the Forest, we looked up. Far off in the sky was a dot that swooped down as soon as it saw us. Within moments, it was hovering not too far in front of us.

Name: Girodio Gyuohga

Race: Black Dragon

Class: Dragon King

Level: 402

Title: Usurper, King of Dragonkind

Just as Lefi had suspected and Maps had indicated, our not-so-

welcome guest was a dragon. Black scales covered his entire body, which looked a size or two larger than what I remembered of Lefi's dragon form. Compared to her more aerodynamic body, his was a lot more rugged and angular. If I could be so bold, he was built like a brick shithouse.



The behemoth's aura was so powerful that it had sweat dripping down my face. *This guy's only showing the stats he wants to.* I knew that because the humongous gap between our levels meant I shouldn't have been able to see *anything*. But just like with Lefi, Analysis gave me a few bits of info, which I assumed was because he was allowing others to see them.

He was still less than half of Lefi's level. There was no point comparing mine to his, though; mine wasn't anywhere close in any sense of the word. When I inspected him using Demon Eyes, I saw that the magical energy whirling around his entire body was also outrageously powerful. If he ever decided to fight for real, it was very possible that he'd be able to blast his magic nonstop for three full days. And I bet he'd still have plenty to spare even after that.

"Hmph. I have finally found you, Supreme Dragon Lefisios. Why do you take on that abhorrent human guise?"

The black dragon surveyed his surroundings with utter contempt. Made me wanna punch him right in his stupid face. He scoffed when he spoke to Lefi, his stare menacing. Though I'd panicked just a teeny bit when I realized how totally out of my league he was in terms of power, seeing his expression was like getting a bucket of cold water dumped on my head, and back to reality I was. My nerves settled, and with a regained sense of composure, I decided that he and I were most definitely not fated to be friends. At all. *Well, sucks to suck, I guess.*

"State your business, Gyuohga. You should be well aware that I have neither the time nor the patience to entertain a hatchling such as yourself."

Lefi glared ferociously at the black dragon. Her tone was a hundred times sharper than steel, which was another rarity for her.

"Bah. Defiant as ever I see. You are the only one remaining who still considers me a child."

"Tell me why you now hold the throne of the Dragon King. What has become of Belm?"

I guessed Lefi had checked out his stats too. With that "Usurper" title, it didn't take a genius to figure out the answer to her question. But for the non-rocket scientists, that meant he stole the crown.

"If you are referring to that decrepit pile of bones, I killed him, thereby becoming the new Dragon King. All who live in the dragon village now obey *me!*"

"I am to believe that Belm was slain by the likes of you?"

I could tell by Lefi's expression that the news came as a shock. Based on her comments and tone of voice, Belm must've been the former Dragon King.

"Indeed he was! Now *I* sit on the throne! The one you call a

hatchling is the Dragon King!”

“Hmph. Ridiculous. What of the other ancient dragons, then? They would never bow to you.”

“Those senile ancients are nothing more than a burden to our race. Privileged to be born as dragonkind, yet they forsook their ambitions long ago. Thus, I ordered my subordinates to expel them from the settlement. And I will continue to utilize all who are under my command as I prepare to take over the world! I am here now to invite you to join me!”

“I beg your pardon?”

Seeing the confusion on Lefi’s face, the black dragon kept going, his voice burning with passion.

“Supreme Dragon Lefisios! I command you to join me! The two of us can easily rule over all! Become my mate, and together, we will reign supreme over this world!”

That was the last straw. I couldn’t keep my mouth shut anymore.

“Shut your *fucking* mouth.”

“What did you say?”

For the first time, the black dragon actually looked at me.

“I’ve had to stand here and listen to you yammer this whole damn time. Could you *be* any more pretentious? Knock it off, asshole. It’s disgusting. Or, what? Widdle baby dragon wuvs himself so much he thinks he’s God’s gift to dragonkind?”

The black dragon’s expression twitched in surprise at my words. Maybe he wasn’t used to being heckled like this?

“You wanna rule the world or whatever? Be my freaking guest. But keep your little circle jerk to yourself, you pissbag. Don’t get others involved in your garbage. Didn’t anybody ever teach you that causing trouble for people makes you a dick?”

“A pest like you dares to ridicule me?!”

The black dragon howled and bared his fangs at me. I just sneered back.

“Nah, nothing like that. I’m just teaching a moron some common sense. Man, can’t believe you couldn’t figure that out for yourself. You might *look* all big and scary, but it sure seems like you’ve got the brains of a toddler who was dropped on his head one too many times. I’d laugh if it weren’t so dang sad.”

Lefi picked up the conversation from there.

“There you have it, whelp. I have no interest whatsoever in taking over the world, nor so much as a modicum of desire to be your mate. Return to the village and find some maiden to woo.”

Rage flared on the black dragon’s face, but he dialed it back almost immediately and narrowed his eyes sharply.

“I see. I understand now. That pest is the reason you choose to

play at being human, Lefisios.”

“Well, you are not wrong. He is my companion, after all. Unlike you, an imbecile whose stupidity knows no bounds, he is a, shall we say, slightly more superior, more refined imbecile. If you truly understand, then it is long past time for you to take your leave. I could have been napping inside instead of wasting my breath on this fruitless conversation with you. How irksome.”

“Yeah, what she said. Get lost. Anyway, heeey, Miss Lefi? If ya don’t mind, I’d like to dig a little deeper into your opinion of me.”

“Whatever for? Do we not know each other intimately enough that we do not need words to express ourselves?”

“No, no, no. I mean, yeah, I’d *like* to think so, but see, for *some* reason, I’ve started to have some serious doubts about that.”

“Surely it must be your imagination.”

We deliberately ignored the black dragon as we chatted. He shook his head a few times, and I could see in his face that he’d figured us out.

“I see, I see.”

And then, my entire body went into crisis mode!

“Hngh!”

I’d only had a split second to see the attack. The moment I thought I’d seen him move, he was already right in front of me. It was sheer dumb luck that I’d even managed to defend myself in time. My brain had obeyed my body’s strong survival instinct by moving my arms to put En between us.

The impact on the sword felt like an F1 race car crashing full speed into a barricade. So, naturally, I got blasted backward, tumbling ass over head through the air. The way everything spun around and around for the first few dozen meters I was sent flying meant it took me a second to get my shit together. As soon as I did, I brought out both sets of wings and managed to regain control of my body midair, stopping myself before I could crash-land. The arm that took the bulk of that hit was throbbing like a sonuvabitch, though.

“Bah, you deflected my attack. A pest should let itself be crushed like the pest it is.”

The black dragon huffed arrogantly at me. He was standing in the exact spot I’d been in before he’d tried to kill me with a swipe of his arm.

“Yuki! You will pay for that, Gyuohga!”

“You could not keep pace with me, Lefisios. It seems that assuming human form has drastically reduced your physical abilities. You have grown feeble, proving that there are bounds to even the Supreme Dragon’s strength.”

“Then suffer, whelp! You will regret those words when I take what

is left of your miserable life right here and—”

“Stop, Lefi.”

Lefi was on the verge of picking up the proverbial gauntlet the black dragon had thrown, but I stopped her. She’d been grinding her teeth in rage and giving him the death stare, but as soon as I spoke, she turned to look at me instead.

“Yuki! Are you all right?!”

“Right as rain. How ya holding up, En?”

“I’m fine... Are you sure you’re okay, Master?”

“Sure am. All good on my end. Never been better.”

If the being I considered a daughter said she was fine, then I, as her makeshift father, just *had* to say the same. Even if my arms and legs had been blown off, my answer wouldn’t have changed.

“Let *me* take care of this, Lefi. You just stand over there and watch.”

“But—”

“I said I’d protect you, didn’t I?”

She looked taken aback for a second, but then she chuckled softly.

“Yes, you did indeed say that. Then carry out your duty firmly and protect me. And you had best ensure that you do not make a fool of me or yourself by allowing such a trifling creature to best you in combat.”

Having said her piece, she walked a safe distance away and sat down, crossing her legs and folding her arms. Her whole attitude told me that she trusted me and wouldn’t interfere. *She really is something else. Seriously, what an amazing woman.* I grinned shamelessly at her, then turned toward the shit-for-brains dragon.

He was a lot stronger than me. Like, “there’s no making up the difference” a lot. Even just looking at our levels, his was more than five times as high as mine. His attack just now was more than enough to give me a solid guess as to just how big the gap was. Logically, I wasn’t even sure I had a one percent chance of winning against him.

I didn’t care. Every last bit of that stopped mattering the second this sorry excuse for a dragon had commanded Lefi to become his mate. That was why it was me, not her, who had to take him down. No matter what happened, I and I alone had to be the one to destroy this punk-ass bitch. He was my enemy through and through, and there wasn’t a doubt in my mind about it.

“An insect would presume to be my opponent? Such conceit when it was through pure luck that you were able to evade my attack!”

“You sure got a lot to say for someone who just tried to sucker punch me. And I *still* dodged it. I’m just that good, baby. So show me whatcha got, dipshit dragon, because I’m *hella* strong right now.”

Gripping En tight, I grinned like a madman.

“Enough of your infernal prattling! We shall see how much longer your impudence lasts, pest!”

And that, folks, was how I ended up in a fight to the death against a member of this world’s strongest race.



“Haah, haah...!”

Gasping for breath, I jumped, dashed, rolled, and crawled on all fours to evade the godforsaken dragon’s attacks. Craters formed in the ground. Rocks exploded. Trees broke and came crashing down. Within moments, the terrain around us had changed dramatically. But there was no rest for my mind or my body as the relentless assault wound my nerves tighter and tighter.

Physically, it felt like I’d been fighting for an hour—maybe even two. In reality, though, I didn’t think it’d been more than ten minutes since our battle had started. So far, I had somehow been managing to avoid the black dragon bastard’s blows. His attacks were surprisingly direct, making them easy for me to read. Really made you wonder how he managed to get himself that Usurper title. Though to be fair, he would come at me so fast that all it took was the blink of an eye and the next blow was already heading my way.

I had to wonder about his background. He must have faced a lot of strong opponents in his lifetime, so that could have been why he focused single-mindedly on bulldozing his enemy with nothing but overwhelming strength. Might also explain why he didn’t try any feints or tricks with his attacks. *He really is a goddamn meathead.*

I’d said it before and I would sure as hell say it again: I was beyond grateful for my demon lord body. I wouldn’t have been able to handle this fight otherwise. Because of my special Demon Eyes, my dynamic visual acuity was unreal, which was why I could see his attacks and dodge them by a hair’s breadth. It literally felt like I was surviving by the skin of my teeth.

Another thing to note was his title of Usurper. Seemed that it fell in the category of “sinful titles,” which worked in my favor as the Adjudicator. As a refresher, that particular title granted me a stat multiplier of 1.5 whenever I faced off against opponents with crime-related titles. Because of that, I knew that my physical abilities were much better than usual.

But, and I really hated to admit it, the fart-sniffer was still unbelievably strong. He proved with every attack that he was most definitely a part of the strongest race in this world. If I lost focus for even a second, I would be reborn as ground meat. Not even a premium blend either.

“Keh heh heh. How unsightly. Where is that vigor you boasted of

so proudly? Hm?”

The mofo swiped at me while he jeered. I dodged by dropping so low to the ground that I could kiss it. When his arm whooshed over me, I jumped up and swung En at him.

I wouldn't give him the chance to block her. The spot I was aiming for was where his scales were thinnest. En's blade found its mark, slicing through his flesh and sending blood oozing out of him. I had tried test cuts on Lefi's old scales but hadn't been able to make a single dent in any of them. His scales were a lot more supple than hers, though.

“Well, well. Look what we have here. Did an insect just make you bleed? Hell yeah!”

“...”

Just then, I felt a sudden burst of magic. It was right around my feet. I tried to retreat, but I couldn't move, which meant I couldn't avoid the attack. The ground beneath me exploded, letting out a shock wave so powerful it shook my whole body super violently.

“Gaaah!”

My body tumbled across the ground over and over before stopping when I crashed into a giant boulder. The impact was so strong that my lungs stopped functioning properly and I couldn't breathe for a second.

“Ah... Haahhh...!”

I didn't have time to let my respiratory system fix itself. Instead, I forced deep breaths in and out. With the sudden influx of oxygen coursing through my aching body, I whipped myself into shape and staggered upright, and fast. Why? Because I could see the damn dragon's fangs rushing toward me.

When he got close enough, I threw myself back down on the ground, flattening myself like a pancake. I tucked and rolled as I escaped before immediately jumping up again. Spotting his thick neck right before my eyes, I swung at it with En. But he was alert now because her blade had managed to slash him earlier, and the son of a bitch quickly pulled his head back, avoiding my attack.

Using that momentum, he spun around and used his tail like a whip, slamming it into me. Kinda sucked that that was the only part that was like a whip, though, because his tail was as thick as a giant tree. I took a direct hit and blasted off again, bouncing off the ground a few times.

My vision blurred and flickered. A dull, heavy pain wracked my whole body. If I dropped my guard even a little bit right now, I knew I would pass out.

“Behold, Lefisios! This man is only proficient at using his mouth. He has no real power to speak of! Do you see now that I am the only

one suitable to be with you?!”

The dickhead yapped, but Lefi squeezed her lips together tightly. She stared intently at me, her arms still folded. She didn't budge at all because she believed in me.

“Shut...the hell up. A narcissistic clown like you isn't worthy of Lefi. You're just blowing hot air, dillweed.”

I squeezed those words out of my throat. Collapsed on the ground, I mustered up what energy I could to drag a potion from the pouch wrapped around my thigh. I downed its contents in one swallow. This right here was another reason I was still alive. That dumbass took every opportunity to talk himself up to Lefi, acting so cool and suave, and whenever he did, I took it as *my* chance to recover and get myself prepped again.

I would've bet my left nut that he was letting me get away with it. This scum-sucker was so far up his own ass that he thought he'd win even if I healed myself. He had a real hard-on for making me look like some pathetic loser. That way, he could show Lefi how much more powerful he was than me, preening like a damn peacock during mating season. In an objective sense, though, I could see why he was dead set on making me look like an idiot.

Too bad for him he's just wasting his time. Lefi had known since forever ago what a train wreck of a person I actually was. Homeboy had no freaking clue how much time the two of us spent together every day. We fought constantly over the dumbest shit. We played pranks and got fed up with each other. We told each other jokes, both good and bad ones. But most importantly, we trusted each other and laughed together all the time.

We learned about each other's personalities—the little things that made us tick. Every moment of every day added layers and layers of depth to our bond. We knew each other so well by now that we didn't even have to talk about it. So it wasn't like our lives together were just for show. He didn't know a single goddamn thing about our relationship.

“Hah. To think a cretin crawling disgracefully on the ground should still be so defiant. Rot in the earth like the wretched pest you are.”

“Seriously, dude...do you ever...shut up? I'll tell you...one thing...though. Bugs are...strong too.”

Especially ants and bees. Those guys definitely fell in the “powerful” category of monsters in this forest.

Panting, gasping for air, I could feel the potion working its, ahem, magic on my body. I planted both hands on the ground to push myself up. Then, I took a firm hold of En—and Danger Detection warned me about an attack coming from my blind spot behind me.

I didn't even bother turning around to look; I just dove forward to dodge the attack. Good thing I did, because something zoomed through the spot where I'd been just a second ago. Whizzing past me was a thick spear, black all over. I had successfully avoided that chode's attack, but Danger Detection told me that he was nowhere near done. Catching my breath gave me enough time to realize that I was completely surrounded by those black spears—and that they were hurtling right toward me.

“Shit!”

I rolled on the ground, used En to block, and twisted my body every which way to evade them. Unfortunately, it just wasn't possible for me to not get hit by a single one of what felt like an infinite number of the things. A few dozen grazed me, leaving deep cuts in my skin. A bunch of others stopped by stabbing into me.

“Hrngggghh!”

The only saving grace to come out of putting up my defense was that I'd avoided taking any fatal blows. That said, a spear *did* manage to pierce through my leg, which I'm sure he loved. When it did, that leg suddenly lost all its strength. I fell to my knees, unable to stand anymore, and at that exact moment, the cocksucker's tail came rushing my way. With so many spears sticking out of me that I felt like some sort of hedgehog, I couldn't dodge his attack and he landed a direct hit, sending me flying.

“Gaaah! Arghhh...!”

I lost consciousness for a second. When I came to, I was lying on the ground, the deep blue sky stretching out endlessly above me. My lungs demanded that I suck in some fresh air, which restarted my breathing. In response, my heart started pounding, working overtime to help keep me alive. I kinda wished I'd stayed knocked out because now that I was awake again, my body was treating me to a full-course meal of pain, pain, and more pain. It hurt so bad that all I wanted to do was scream and cry and writhe around.

Blood dripped slowly but steadily from my countless wounds. Hands shaking, I pulled all the spears out of my body, then reached for the last bottle of Super Potion I had in my pouch. I was tired of drinking the things, so instead, I crushed the vial in my hand and dripped the liquid all over myself.

“You still will not die. But your greedy life force certainly matches that of a pest.”

The shitstain dragon sneered contemptuously down at me, acting like he had all the time in the world to chew me up and spit me out. It seriously pissed me off.

“...Heh heh.”

But I just cackled.

“Heh heh...heh heh heh!”

I cackled like I was having fun—because I *was*. So much so that my shoulders shook. I slowly pulled myself up, laughing like a psycho and swaying like a ghost. *Preparations complete.*

“So, you have finally gone mad. You cannot even speak in your wretched state.”

The scumbag black dragon stared at me with disdain. I didn’t give a damn, though, because it was my turn now.

“Hey, asshole. Better watch your feet.”

I grinned a big, nasty grin. Then, I pushed a button on my interface, which I’d had open this whole time. Immediately, and without any warning, the ground underneath him vanished.

“What?!”

Caught by surprise, he lost his footing as gravity did its thing and he fell into the ginormous hole. Set within it were dozens of spikes thrusting upward, their points sharpened and drenched with poison.

The bastard tried right away to flap his wings and take off into the sky. It was like he thought I’d missed the part where he could fly or something. Spoilers: I hadn’t. In fact, I’d planned for just this scenario. Sucked to be him.

His massive body flew smack into one of the many aerial summoning circles designed as traps I’d set up. They’d cost me a good chunk of DP since they were a special type, but it was *so* worth it. Once he ran into one of them, the impact set off a chain reaction, causing explosion after explosion after explosion. Flames showered the space all around him, and the thunderous blasts shook the earth, sending huge shock waves through the air itself.

When the black smoke finally cleared, I saw that the soot-stained dragon had taken...a not-insignificant amount of damage. *Good. Looks like it was effective.* If there hadn’t been a single scratch on him after all that, I for sure would’ve broken down crying like a little bitch right then and there.

“Grr! You cunning, insolent pest!”

“Heh heh. Ya know, I spent most of my DP getting you that lovely little gift, so make sure you enjoy every last bit of it for me. I mean it. Don’t hold back on my account.”

Up until a few minutes ago, I’d been absolutely swimming in DP. The combination of converting all the weapons and armors I’d picked up at Lefi’s old haunt and my nonstop monster hunting had fattened up my wallet real nice. I’d been well on my way to achieving my goal of summoning more followers.

Most of it was gone now, but it had paid off in a big way. That whole time I’d been getting my ass kicked up and down this section of forest, I’d been sneakily installing as many traps as I could, wherever I

could. The button I'd pushed just moments ago had, of course, activated those traps.

Needless to say, setting up a minefield was easy peasy. Anyone who said otherwise was a dirty liar, as shown by how I'd successfully transformed this whole area into a veritable killing zone. Ignoring out-of-the-ordinary beings like dragons, any living creature would most definitely get blasted into the next life with a single misstep. I'd designed the system so that it would destroy anything and everything.

This had been my intent from the start. Only mythical characters or heroes from fairy tales had a chance of winning a head-to-head battle against an opponent that so tremendously outclassed them, and I was neither. Just your average, everyday person. No, wait. Just your average, everyday demon lord. In other words, I had only one path to victory when faced with such a ridiculously powerful enemy: I had to use every dastardly, unorthodox, underhanded trick in all the books everywhere. I had no choice except to take advantage of any weakness I could find. Storm the castle from behind, so to speak.

The biggest factor here was that *I* was the law in these parts. This area was part of my dungeon's territory, so it was *my* world. In order to secure a win, relying on the dungeon's power was a necessity. *Please, Mr. Dungeon, I really, seriously can't afford to lose.* I sincerely hoped that it would offer me every conceivable method it had to help me come out on top in this battle.

"Okey dokey. How's about we get started on round two?"

Now that I'd leveled the playing field a little, I shot those words at him with a shit-eating grin on my face. The dingus of a dragon roared and his face twisted in rage. *Hmm, I wonder why.* Maybe he wasn't too thrilled about taking a metaphorical load right to the face from the guy he'd been smacking around like a piñata until now? Skill issue.



"Did you truly believe such paltry tricks would work on me?!"

It was just too bad that my explosion traps hadn't given the black dragon any life-threatening injuries. Though he'd taken some degree of damage, he looked utterly fed up now. Flapping his wings angrily, the annoying piece of crap rushed right at me. His anger was making him fly much faster than before, almost like he was a speeding bullet. But fast was all he was.

"Easy there, big fella. If you don't look out, you'll run into walls over there."

"Gyaaah?!"

The Harden trap I'd set in the air worked like a charm. He smashed headfirst into a wall—a wall made of air, to be exact. It was a way harder hit than I'd expected it to be too. He was moving so fast

that he practically knocked himself unconscious. Granted, he busted the wall, but it knocked him backward, at least.

Strictly speaking, even though I called it one, Harden wasn't actually a trap. Originally, it was a dungeon function designed to protect the dungeon itself. It was the sort of thing you'd find in places like boss rooms, for example. No matter how crazy things got inside, walls and floors and stuff wouldn't break. But wouldn't you know it, I could use it on more than just *physically* hard substances or surfaces.

Basically, I could harden pretty much anything. If I wanted to harden some water, I just had to pick a section and use the function on it. Bada bing bada boom, wall of water. In the same vein, if I specified a particular range up in the air, I could use Harden to create a transparent wall of air.

I'd discovered this method a while ago while experimenting with creating attractions like an aquarium for Iluna and the others. When I'd inspected the results, I'd found out that the walls of air were as solid as ones made of concrete. I also knew that Harden strengthened the dungeon's walls and floors enough that even Lefi's attacks wouldn't destroy our home's interior. As long as she held back, of course.

Basically, anything and everything depended on how you used it. Me being me, I couldn't resist testing out different uses for the function. So here we were, with strong, invisible walls in midair. But because this use case was extremely unique, it cost a buttload of DP, which was why I'd only built the one wall between me and him. It was supposed to be a one-shot-kill kinda deal since he couldn't have avoided it without knowing about it. A second wall probably would've been a waste because I doubted I could make him fall for the same trick twice.

"Curse you!"

The jerkoff recovered almost immediately from being all loopy-headed, and boy was he pissed. My Demon Eyes spotted a massive concentration of magic gathering in his mouth. I was positive that was the wind-up before he launched his very own Dragon Roar, that "dragonkind's most powerful attack" Lefi had used before.

I'm dead meat if I take a hit from that. I didn't think his would be as powerful as Lefi's, but I had no doubt this second life would be over if his attack so much as grazed me. In an attempt to remove myself as a target, I tried to hightail it out of there, but the jerkwad twisted his neck, keeping me right in his sights. And then, an explosion came out of literally nowhere from right next to his face.

Because of the amount of magic he had in his mouth, that explosion created a secondary one. Intense heat and flames surrounded this whole stretch of land as a result, but it kinda made

me wonder if a missile had been dropped instead. Shock waves surged past me, almost making me stagger.

What has two thumbs and caused that first explosion? This guy! That was aaall me, baby. It wasn't a physical trap like my primary MO. No, I'd used magic as fuel to create a magical trap. Once it was activated, it blew up with just a touch. It also worked like normal gunpowder, setting off secondary explosions by swallowing up any other sources of magic that existed nearby.

The trap was designed to work primarily against magicians and conjurers, but it looked like it worked against dragons too, and crazy well at that. Made sense given how strong their magic was. Plus, I was a friggin' genius and had booked it out of there to get him to put his mouth right next to it. Luckily for me, the big bastard had been so kind as to play right into my hands.

In the back of my mind, I'd suspected that he didn't have much combat experience. Between all the thrashing I'd endured and him falling for my schemes, though, I was almost positive I was right. He moved like greased lightning and his attacks were the real deal. The speed of his magic activation was no joke either. And yet, for how massively strong he was, he had absolutely nothing else going for him.

His attacks were simple and overly straightforward. He tunnel-visioned hard too because his one-track mind had a real small track. He focused on whatever was right in front of him and that was it. So, despite being a much lower level than him, I still survived against an opponent like him thanks to his total incompetence.

Once—just once—I'd gone hunting with Lefi when she was in her dragon form. Her combat skills on that excursion were so out of this world that the memory alone made me speechless all over again. Beautiful. Glorious. Fierce. Those were the best words I could come up with to describe it. After seeing her move in her original form with my very own eyes, I'd finally understood why she alone stood at the top of this world's hierarchy. I'd felt the majesty of her being in the depths of my soul.

Then there was this tool. Despite also being part of the strongest race, despite ruling over said race as the exalted Dragon King, he was hella weak compared to her. It was entirely possible that Lefi was just that exceptional, even among her own kind, but for how huge the power difference between him and me was, the fact that he *still* couldn't TKO me proved the true extent of his abilities. Turned out that he kinda sucked.

Now it clicked why Lefi had looked so baffled when she saw the King of Dragonkind title included in his stats. Maybe some weird external factor was responsible for that. Right as I had that thought, the cloud of black smoke wrapped around him cleared up.

What a sight, damn. Today I learned that dragons' magic is mega powerful against dragons themselves too. Done in by his own colossal store of magical energy that he'd packed into his gaping maw, dickboy dragon looked waaay worse for wear. His entire body was covered in burn marks and he was knocked out cold. I could have sworn I saw the whites of his eyes. *All right, now's my chance!*

Figuring my own attacks wouldn't inflict much damage on him, I decided to use the rest of my DP to keep on the offensive with more traps. Just as I was about to set up some good ones around him, the motherfucker's eyes rolled back and stared right at me.

"Grrraaaaawwwrrr!!!"

"Bwah?!"

With a beastly roar, he jerked his head my way, then launched himself directly toward me. One of my aerial traps snagged him, setting off an explosion, but he still didn't stop.

"Ngh!"

In a panic, I hurled myself out of his warpath. Sadly, though, I felt a magical reaction at the spot where I landed. All of a sudden, the ground beneath me bulged up like crazy. Then, it shot me into the sky. And above my head, I saw the bastard's sharp claws about to slash down. *Well, shit!*

I didn't even have time to escape by flying. His claws tore into my flesh, while he used the momentum of his arm to slam me back down to the earth. He bashed me so hard that my body flattened the ground his magic had raised.

"Mpf!"

The impact rocked through me from head to toe, and the pain that came with it had my vision shorting out. But there was no time to rest. Lying crushed on the ground, all my blurry eyes could see were his claws heading in to dismember me.

Instantly, I slapped my hand on a nearby trap to activate it. This particular trap was designed to shoot a giant iron pole from the ground. When it stabbed into him, I managed to change the trajectory of his claws away from my battered body. Then, a second later, the shitter's jaws snapped shut right beside me. I quickly rolled away from him, putting much-needed space between us—and there was magic again!

"Goddammit!"

The intense pain made my body feel extra sluggish. Sheer willpower was the only thing keeping me moving. I spread my wings and used all my might to flap them so I could escape, but I was a second too late. More of those black spears stabbed into the spot I was in, impaling me. *Thwack, thwack, thwack!*

Christ on a cracker, he's fast. He'd completely switched gears,

seemingly driven by unstoppable rage. His speed had nearly doubled now, and so had the intensity of his attacks. Before, he'd been behaving like a cat tormenting a mouse, but now, he was a tiger, concentrated solely on taking down his prey.

This was very much *not* a laughing matter, not when it was *my* ass on the line. Obviously, I would have loved to crush him once and for all while he was still underestimating me, but things weren't gonna be that easy for me. Not that this had been a walk in the park before now, though.

I had actually managed to fly up into the sky, but alas, my luck ran out there. The sumbitch dragon snapped his attention toward me and chased after me, beating his wings vigorously. Then, he started shooting flames out of his mouth while still in hot pursuit. *Godzilla, no!* Just kidding. But not really.

Hounded by the insane heat, I continued my mad escape by controlling my flight path with my wings. I didn't let up on my stream of curses the whole time either. I'ma leave the exact phrases to your imagination, though.

In any case, it didn't look like he was using Dragon Roar. I could tell those flames were dangerous enough on their own, though, because both the temperature and the amount of magic in them were off the charts. And he could fire them in rapid succession, which was exactly what he did as I tried desperately to dodge them. *Shit, shit, shit! At this rate, he'll catch up to me in no time!*

My escape route was such that I tried to force him to brush up against more of my aerial traps. Except when he did, he more or less ignored the fact that he was getting blasted left and right to focus on his hunt. Even if he slowed down for a second or two, that was all the time I had before he was right back on my tail. That one-track mind, man.

Him being a dragon made the whole thing a hundred times worse. Dragons were masters of the sky in this world; I couldn't hold a candle to him in the flight department. Case in point: despite the traps running interference, he was steadily closing the distance between us.

It dawned on me it was only a matter of time before he had me at a serious disadvantage. I decided on the spot to change course, accelerating further upward in the sky. The dirtbag kept pace, though, as he saw me switch directions. Then, for just a second, he scrunched up his face, squinting against the bright sun that bathed him in its brilliance.

Now!

Not even the strongest race in the world could stare directly into the sun. In that brief span of time when he flinched, I popped a quick U-ie and let myself free-fall. I added speed to the drop by flapping my

wings and aimed my body right down toward the damn dragon.

“Eat my shorts!”

Realizing he wouldn’t be able to react in time to avoid my dangerously fast dive-bomb, he shot a fireball at me in a last-ditch attempt to stop me. I skillfully dodged it. Then, just when I would have passed right by him, I let out a war cry and slashed him with my beloved sword.

“Grrroooarrr?!”

I could feel the impact in my arms. Having thrown my entire body weight into my free-fall, I sliced him from a corner of his mouth up to one of his eyes. In the process, I managed to rip one of his fangs out of his mouth, right at the root. Blood sprayed all around us.

Still holding En, I kicked hard at his body and tried to slip away, but the asshole went berserk from the pain. He jerked from side to side, and his tail smacked hard into me. The unexpected blow sent my body hurtling into a nasty tailspin that cost me control over my movements.

“Graaawwwrrr!”

Bitch-ass opened his jaws nice and wide. He’d managed to reposition himself. *What the hell, man?!* Since I was still tumbling like the world’s worst acrobat, I couldn’t maneuver in time to dodge him, so he bit off my left arm and wings.

“Hrngaaahhh!”

Before just now, I never would’ve believed I was capable of screaming like that. Yet here I was, shrieking my lungs out in agony. This time, it was *my* blood gushing everywhere. With half my wings basically gone, I couldn’t fly very well anymore, so I dropped fast from the sky, slamming into the ground like a sack of bricks.

“M-Master!”

I could hear En’s desperate cries echoing faintly in my head. Dazed, I opened my eyes and saw a blurry but incredibly blue sky.

“Ah! You’re alive! Th-Thank goodness, Master!”

It was the first time I’d heard En at her wit’s end like that. Strangely enough, her frazzled voice helped me gradually regain consciousness. Lifting my head, I checked my body over with my hazy eyesight.

My left arm was gone. Dingleberry had bitten it clean off at the shoulder. The right one was still attached, but try as I might, I couldn’t get it to move an inch. Not even a twitch. I honestly wasn’t even sure if it was actually my arm.

The pair of wings on my left side were in the same boat as my left arm. They didn’t exist anymore either. And my right-side wings were so broken that I doubted I could use them at all.

As for the rest of me, I didn't think there was a single spot left on my body that didn't have some sort of injury. I'd gone way beyond the limits of agony and shot right into numbness. I felt nothing at all. The only silver lining was that both of my legs still worked.

I was in such a bad way that there wasn't a whole lot that set me apart from a corpse. *But I lived, bitch. I'm still alive. Fuckin' bet.*

"M-Master, no! You can't move yet!"

"Heh heh... Sorry, En. Gotta...keep going."

I responded to En's distressed telepathic pleas out loud, a strained smirk on my face. Glancing casually at my opponent, I found him howling and writhing in pain because of the gash I'd carved into his face. *He's still kickin' too, eh?*

I was no chump either. Even if I was unsteady, I could move, and that meant I was just fine. I could keep going as long as I had this demon lord body.

Channeling my inner caterpillar, I wriggled my way toward En, who'd gotten a fair bit of my blood on her. I squirmed until I could grab her hilt between my teeth, then I clamped down tightly. Next, I strained my shaking legs into a kneeling position, and a moment later, I was back on my feet.



"Grrraaawwwr!"

The black dragon Gyuohga lay on the ground, writhing in agony. His wounds burned feverishly, while acute, tremendous pain assailed him from his destroyed, bloody eye.

Before now, the black dragon had never truly experienced the sensation that was pain. As far as he was concerned, all the enemies he'd faced thus far were nothing more than weak upstarts, insignificant insects to be crushed under his might. So, naturally, none of his enemies had ever managed to land a real blow on him. He would admit he had been injured somewhat during his fight with the previous Dragon King, but this was the first time in his entire life that someone had inflicted any serious wounds on him.

"Hmph. You are an eyesore, Gyuohga."

"Grrrr!"

The owner of that voice sneered derisively at him. His hackles rose and he in turn stared daggers at the one watching him with such cold eyes: the Supreme Dragon, Lefisios.

"You derided and mocked Yuki incessantly, yet when you yourself are wounded, you can do nothing but chirp like a baby bird. Pathetic. The Dragon King will certainly be dismayed to hear that you put on such an unbecoming display."

"Silence, Lefisios! He will hear nothing, for I have already killed

him! Just as I crushed your dearly beloved pest right before your very eyes!”

Gyuohga had devoured the insect’s arm and wings. With his remaining eye, he could see that his enemy was still on the ground where he had fallen. He hadn’t moved in some time, and that was unlikely to change. The black dragon’s true aim had been to dismember the pest with his fangs and swallow him whole, but having only one working eye had caused him to misjudge the distance to his prey. That was why he had only managed to tear off parts of his opponent. Even so, however, the fact remained that Gyuohga had killed him.

Thus, reckless and unafraid, he attempted to provoke the Supreme Dragon. But Lefi’s expression remained unchanged, the frosty smile still on her lips.

“Oh ho, is that right? Pray tell me once more who killed whom?”

“What?!”

Hearing the Supreme Dragon’s words, Gyuohga jerked his head toward the man whom he should have eliminated. Shock and panic surfaced on his face at what he saw—his foe was on his feet. The black dragon had been so certain he’d killed the insect, yet that very insect was standing once again.

The boy was battered and worn out. Countless wounds covered his body, likening him more to a corpse than a living being. Nevertheless, he had his sword clamped between his teeth and was trudging toward Gyuohga one step at a time, his legs moving through force of will alone. Despite the condition he was in, he remained intent on cutting down the black dragon. *Impossible! How does he yet live?!*

By all accounts, the man should have been dead. Gyuohga found it unnerving that he could move at all. Until the last clash between them, he had been drinking some sort of restorative medicine to recover, but based on the state of his wounds, he hadn’t drunk any more of it. He couldn’t have even if he wanted to, given that his surviving arm didn’t seem to be functioning properly. And yet, the pest continued his march toward Gyuohga.

“My partner is not so weak as to be killed by *your* attacks.”

The Supreme Dragon’s barbed remark invaded the black dragon’s mind, reverberating endlessly inside it. He knew something was abnormal about his enemy. The peculiar aura emanating from the man he had ridiculed over and over as a pest enveloped him, a dark sense of foreboding swallowing him whole. And then, during his close observation of the insect, their eyes met.

The man smiled smugly. A chill raced down Gyuohga’s spine, and he inadvertently retreated a single step.

“D-Don’t come any closer!”

He shouted unthinkingly while whipping his tail. The pest couldn’t avoid his attack, and so he took the full brunt of his lash. He bounced along the ground unceremoniously a few times, then, several moments later, slowly rose again.

“Ngh!”

Gyuohga grunted unintelligently, astonished. His opponent acted like he hadn’t just been attacked. Almost nonchalantly, he struggled into a kneeling position before pushing himself back up. The black dragon shuddered at the sight, and a fearsome, icy sensation blanketed him.

He finally understood. *That man is most likely immortal.* Just like the Undead—no, he was *worse* than them. A terrifying monster who would never die no matter how many times he was killed.

He is dangerous. Far too dangerous. The black dragon’s instinct blared that warning at him. He had to snuff out his enemy’s life right here and now. He knew that shallow blows wouldn’t be enough because the man would just revive again and again, making his only option to use dragonkind’s most powerful magic, the Dragon Roar. He would annihilate the man so wholly that not even a remnant of his flesh would remain. Gyuohga would erase him from this world.

I must eradicate him. Resolved to carry out his plan, the black dragon began accumulating magical energy in his mouth to release his Dragon Roar. He inhaled deeply—then his vision blurred severely and he toppled to the ground.

“What is...the meaning...of this?!”

“Holy...baloney. Ya finally...tapped out.”

After kicking my ass six ways from Sunday, the buttface dragon finally dropped like a stone, shaking the ground when he hit. Watching it happen, I couldn’t wipe the shit-eating grin from my face. The way his one good eye was darting around let me know that he was insanely confused. He clearly had no clue what’d just happened. And based on the way he could barely string two words together, he was having a hard time moving his mouth too.

“Heh heh. Looks like...it worked, huh?”

It was totally worth powering through the pain no matter how bad it had made me want to cry. *Sweet lord, dragons are scary as fuck.* Their scales were so hard that ordinary weapons couldn’t slice through them. They were so incredibly fast it was easy to lose sight of them. Their tough, durable bodies could easily withstand being way up in the sky. And to top it all off, they made full use of their insane magical energy by blasting round after round of powerful magic.

But for as much as dragonkind was the strongest species in this

world, dragons still very much fell into the “living thing” category. Just like me, they breathed, slept, and ate, all of which I’d learned in extreme detail thanks to my time living with Lefi. It was why I’d set up something other than a trap. Something that represented a universal weakness for all living things yet was a part of the atmosphere surrounding us: carbon monoxide.

In this world, the mysterious substance called mana could be found in the air. Besides that unique difference, though, the air here was basically the same as Earth’s. The combustion experiment I’d done with Iluna and the others had confirmed that for me.

Once my battle with the buttmuncher of a dragon had started, I’d utilized a dungeon function to change the mixture of gases in the air. Because the dungeon’s territory was my very own world, I was the law of the land here. As long as I remained within its boundaries, I could scatter any kind of poisonous gas, including carbon monoxide.

Back on Earth, everybody and their brother knew that carbon monoxide was a toxic gas. If memory served, concentrations greater than 0.15 percent caused intense vertigo and severe nausea within a few minutes. The effects were bad enough that anything breathing it couldn’t stand up straight. If the concentration got above one percent, it resulted in an instant loss of consciousness, and not long after that came death. It was incredibly lethal.

My thought process was that a gas so deadly to living creatures would *have* to affect even the strongest species, the dragons, in a similar manner. And my gamble had paid off. When that asshole had dragged in such a huge breath to finish me off with his Dragon Roar, he’d also sucked a massive amount of carbon monoxide right into his huge-ass body. Then, he’d thankfully, at long freaking last, given in. *Took him long enough, jeez.*

Seriously, what a pain in the ass. Any normal creature would’ve bit the dust ages ago. Not this goddamn nutsack, though. Oh no, he’d kept moving around like everything was fine and dandy, which, naturally, had freaked me the hell out. Dude had had me thinking that carbon monoxide poisoning wasn’t a thing for dragons.

The reason I’d gone with carbon monoxide was because I’d figured out during our battle that he didn’t have a skill like Danger Detection. There were other poisonous gases I could’ve spent my DP on and scattered around the area, of course, but I’d been worried that he would’ve picked up on them with his normal senses, like taste or smell. CO, on the other hand, was next to impossible to recognize because it was colorless, odorless, and tasteless, making it the perfect chemical agent to spread throughout the air.

In the DP Catalog, I’d seen a bunch of other poison gas setups. There might’ve been some better options in there, but seeing as I

didn't know much about other gases' characteristics, I'd decided that my best bet was to not take any chances. The carbon monoxide bit of my plan was another reason I'd gone so hard on explosive-type traps. Because of the way oxygen burned, it created even more carbon monoxide in the air. It was an easy way for me to keep messing with the atmospheric composition without homeboy catching on.

It hadn't taken Lefi long to figure out that I was executing some kind of intricate plan, though. She'd created a defensive wall of air around her. Meanwhile, this dumbass dragon had never put it all together. And with that, we all know what I was up to.

Oh, right, I wasn't affected for basically the same reason as Lefi. Using wind magic, I'd created a safe zone of breathable air around myself. Because I had to use that technique to, you know, keep myself alive, I couldn't actually use any of my magic for offensive purposes. Made me wonder just how stupid this dragon had to be to have never been even a little bit suspicious about my lack of magic use considering this world and my race. *His attention to detail might as well not exist.*

Oh well. He could start fresh once he was sleeping the big sleep. If his Luck was high, he might even get another chance at life like I had.

Literally at my physical limit by this point, I adjusted my mouth's grip on En's hilt and forced my poor body forward. It was slow going, but one step at a time was all I could manage.

"No! No, stop!"

"I gawt no cwue what yu're shayin'."

Whoopsie. He probably doesn't know what I'm saying either.

I snickered, En still clenched between my teeth. Seeing the look on my face, the black dragon seemed terrified. He groaned desperately at me, trying to convey some sort of message. Unfortunately for him, I couldn't tell what he was saying. Supposing I *had* understood him, it was too late. If he'd just been reasonable about this whole ordeal, things might've turned out...the same, actually. Yeah, on second thought, not one damn thing would've changed.

Don't worry, bud. As far as his soon-to-be carcass went, I didn't want to use him in any of my smithing projects, so I'd just convert it all to DP and use that money to strengthen my dungeon. Great way to go, right? *Ashes to ashes, DP to DP, my guy.*

Finally, *finally*, I stood in front of the bastard.

"Wader, ya dighed dwagin'."

That was my-mouth-is-full-of-sword-hilt for "Later, ya dickhead dragon."

Getting in the last word, I swung En at his neck with whatever power was left in me. His black scales couldn't ward off her blade, slicing deep into his flesh and decapitating him.



I felt warm sensations on my head and my cheek. The one enveloping my head was soft, while the one on my cheek ran gently across it over and over again. They made me feel comfortable and secure, like a baby being rocked in its cradle. Submerged in that heavenly daze, I was caught somewhere between dream and reality. As I slowly awakened, I opened my eyes just the tiniest bit—and met Lefi’s gaze as she peered down at me.

“Hm. You are awake.”

“Morning, Lefi.”

Still foggy in the brain, I just stared at her for a while. The fog took its sweet time clearing up, but I eventually started to figure out what was going on.

“Hey, so... Why is my head in your lap?”

Yup. I was using her as a pillow, apparently. Or more accurately, she had made herself my pillow. The warmth enveloping my head was her thighs, and what I felt on my cheek was her hand. *Whoa, mama, her thighs feel good.* I just wanted to bury my face in them and nuzzle them forever. Wait, crap. My train of thought had gone completely off the rails.

“Is there a problem? You fell unconscious due to exhaustion, and as I am a considerate woman, I thought it an excellent idea to soothe your tiredness away. What say you? Am I not the finest pillow in all of existence?”

Though her tone was playful, I replied to her with a serious look on my face.

“Yeah. You really are the best. This feels amazing.”

“You... I-It embarrasses me when you are so frank.”

“All right, wait a sec. Since we’re talking about the world’s best pillows, we gotta talk about your wings too. If I absolutely *had* to choose the *ultimate* pillow, I’d go with your wings for sure. But if we’re talking about what I want to *feel* for all eternity, then it’s definitely your thighs. All in all, though, choosing between the best of the best pillows just isn’t possible. Each one is perfect for different circumstances, meaning it’d be unfair to compare the two. Apples and oranges, y’know? So I’m gonna say both are peak.”

“Yuki, you...are in unexpectedly good health, I see.”

Lefi smiled in astonishment as she made that comment. In response, I stared at her like the strange, incredible person she was. In the next moment, I finally took note of our surroundings. A blue sky. The ground, littered with craters and scorch marks. Farther away, I saw fallen trees, uprooted entirely from the earth. Some areas were totally barren. It was a disaster everywhere I looked.

A little ways away was the massive, collapsed body of a dragon, its black scales glittering in the sunlight. *Right. I fought the scumbag and cut his head off.* The reason I couldn't remember anything from after that was probably because I'd passed out on the spot. Man, that had been some episode, huh? *I'm still amazed I made it out alive.*

"Da fuq? Am I...fixed?"

When I slowly turned my head to give myself the once-over, I saw that even though my clothes were still in tatters, my body had been healed. All those wounds that had made me look like the victim of a massacre were gone without a trace. Not a single one was left. Even the arm that had been bitten off was back, and so were my missing wings. I could move without any issues.

Okay, so that last part was a lie. Despite my body being all patched up, it felt extremely heavy, like it was made of lead or something. I *could* move, but it was a pain in the ass. Just trying to wiggle a finger took a ridiculous amount of effort.

"Lefi, did you heal me?"

"You could say that. It was a simple enough matter for me to heal your wounds. I cannot give you back your strength, however. You will have to rest for some time in order to recover fully."

She shrugged as she spoke.

"Makes sense. Thanks. Oh, wait, what happened to the poison gas I used here?"

"It spread far enough to become ineffective, so you need not worry about that either."

"Dang... Sorry you had to deal with all the cleanup."

"Think nothing of it. You are my partner, after all. I will, at the very least, manage the aftermath for you. Moreover, you can consider this the result of you protecting me successfully, yes?"

I laughed wryly at my dependable partner's words before questioning her.

"You really think I was able to protect you?"

"Indeed. You said you would protect me and you did precisely that. Our enemy lies defeated."

"Sick. Riskin' it for the biscuit paid off, then."

Hearing her say that was all the reward I needed for turning myself into a raggedy dustcloth.

"Risking it' does not even begin to properly describe your behavior. If someone were to call you an unprecedented imbecile for challenging a *dragon* to a fight, I could not deny their words. Though you seem composed on the surface, you are prone to hotheadedness at the slightest trigger. Have you any idea how much of a bother you can be sometimes? You cannot fathom the level of anxiety that plagued me throughout that battle. Odious man."

“Heh heh. But I looked cool, right?”

“Hmm... I will acknowledge you are leagues ahead of that whelp in that regard.”

Her soft laughter was music to my ears. I could feel a smile spreading across my face as I stared up at her.

“Hey. Lefi.”

“Yes?”

“I love you.”

Those three words flew out of my mouth like it was the most natural thing in the world. But I wasn't done yet. I kept talking to Lefi, who was speechless and stock-still.

“I love you, Lefi. From the bottom of my heart, I love you so, so much. I'm head over heels crazy about you.”

“Wh-Wh-Wh-Whatever are you saying?! Th-Th-This is much too sudden!”

Now that my words had finally sunk in, she turned bright red and started babbling nonstop. I didn't get why she was so frazzled, so I cocked my head. “*Too sudden,*” you say... Well, looking at it from her side, it was tough to say she was wrong.

To be honest, I wasn't really sure what had made me blurt all that out in the first place. Having been so close to the brink of death in that extreme battle, maybe I'd finally reached my limit in suppressing my feelings for her? *Mayhap my pot hath bubbled over.* Oh well. The reason wasn't important. I was bound to tell her how I felt sooner or later, and taking the sooner route didn't bother me one bit.

“Seeing as that goddamn dragon put me through the goddamn wringer, I might not be the best match for you in terms of power right now. But you can be damn sure that from now on, I'm gonna devote myself to becoming strong enough to stand proudly as your equal. So if you could just forget about my lackluster performance in that fight, that'd be *super* cool.”

“Hmph. I do not want to hear you debase yourself like this.”

Lefi's cheeks were still red, but she'd managed to recover a bit from her initial confusion. Slightly more composed, she reprimanded me gently before continuing.

“I will have you know that I thought you quite impressive, Yuki. Your form as you fought, it... Y-You were so magnificent that I found myself utterly captivated. Therefore... Therefore, I am certain that you will be able to match—no, *surpass* my power.”

“Does that mean I've got the seal of approval from the Supreme Dragon herself? Hot damn, what an honor.”

I answered her teasingly. Then, I slowly lifted my heavy arms toward her face, stroking the silver-haired girl's snow-white cheek.

“Lefi. I love you. I'm hopelessly, madly in love with you. I don't

ever want to leave you, and I don't want you to ever leave me either. So...will you stay with me forever and a day?"

"In a situation such as this, would a man not normally say something along the lines of, 'You're my woman now'?"

"Nah. I hate that sort of controlling junk. I want you to have the freedom to choose."

"Bah ha! What a terribly self-indulgent partner I have."

Lefi covered the hand I had on her cheek with her own velvety-soft palm.

"Yes. If that is your wish, then I, Lefisios..."

Her expression was brimming with love as she smiled down at me.

"I, Lefisios, hereby bind myself to you for all eternity, Yuki."

Saying that, she slowly moved her face down toward me and pressed her lips against mine.

They felt sweet, supple, and oh-so-satisfying. It was so incredible that I could feel my brain melting. Through her lips, I could feel not only her body heat, but her passionate emotions too. The experience was so sensual that it almost created the illusion of us becoming one.

Seconds? Minutes? Hours? I didn't know how much time passed as our lips touched again and again. Finally, not nearly long enough later, she lifted her face away from mine inch by inch. We gazed into each other's eyes once more, our heads still close together. *Still too far.*

"Well then. This kinda thing sure makes a person feel shy, huh?"

"Oh ho. I have never seen such an expression on your face before. It was well worth the effort, then, in containing my own embarrassment just to have the pleasure of witnessing you in this state."

Her cheeks were still tomato-red, but the smile on Lefi's face looked exactly like the kind you'd see on a mischievous kid. Her childlike innocence was so adorable. But more than that, she was so beautiful that I couldn't tear my eyes away from her. My heart pounded even harder, rushing like a runaway train.

"B-By the by, Yuki, what we just did now...i-it is, um, proof of a vow for dragonkind. In no way, shape, or form is it an abnormal act!"

"Oh reeeally? What kind of vow?"

"W-Well, when we accept a mate, that is what we— You atrocious man! Why are you smiling like that?!"

"Whaddya mean? I'm always smiling like this. But let's put that aside and focus on the topic at hand. What you're saying is that as of today, you're my wife, right?"

"Y-Your wife... Wh-While you are not wrong, this does not mean I will tolerate any high-handedness from you! M-My wrath will prove boundless should you add more young lasses to the fold!"

"Lemme stop you right there, dearest wife of mine. Not *once* did I

intentionally add to the number of little girls around here. Will you get that through your thick skull already?"

How was it *my* fault that their population went up without my consent all the time? *No, seriously, I wanna know why too.* My objection to her remarks had been totally spontaneous, and I couldn't help chuckling at our exchange.

"Hm? Pray tell what you find so amusing?"

"Oh, it's nothing, really. I was just thinking that 'wife' has a nice ring to it."

"Wh-Why must you spout such things? You know how mortified I become when you do."

"But you're cute even when you're being shy, Lefi."

"That is precisely what I mean! I command you to cease with such nonsense!"

She may have been angry, but she didn't seem totally unhappy about what I was saying, which made me chortle even more. Once I stopped laughing, I spoke to her again.

"Hey, Lefi. Can we do that again?"

"Hmph. Since you are hopeless without me, I will deign to grant your request."

She knew right away what I meant by "that." Though she practically rolled her eyes at me, she didn't reject me. Instead, she lowered her face toward mine again, and we...

Chapter 3: Home

“Do...you know...how worried I was...?”

“I-I’m sorry, En. That’s my bad.”

“...”

En, the black-haired, kimono-clad little girl perched on my lap, snubbed me, refusing to so much as look at me. She was usually expressionless, but she was so ridiculously adorable when she was pouting, and in a very bad mood on top of it, that I wanted to take a picture so I could remember it forever. I was pretty sure she’d get even angrier if I said that out loud, though, so I did the smart thing and kept my mouth shut.

“Hey, come on, don’t be like that. I’m gonna hang out with you all day today, aren’t I? Whatever you want me to do, if I can do it, I will. So cheer up, okay?”

“Truly...?”

The girl turned her head just the tiniest bit in my direction when she heard my words.

There was a very good, very simple reason I was humoring En right now. During my battle with the shithead dragon, on top of having gotten my ass thoroughly whooped, I’d passed right the hell out after finishing him off. En had been seriously worried about me throughout the whole thing, but I’d been a total dick and hadn’t thought about her at all. The first thing I’d done when I’d finally regained consciousness was to dive headfirst into flirting and making out with Lefi. She was pissed that I’d basically forgotten about her, and she had every right to be. I would’ve reacted the exact same way if our roles had been reversed. So, feeling incredibly guilty about my behavior, I was doing my absolute damndest to put her in a good mood again.

Wouldn’t you know it, the rest of my dungeon’s inhabitants had also been worried about me. They shouldn’t have known anything about my fight with the dragon since they’d been holed up inside, but that hadn’t stopped them from being concerned. *It’s nice having people who care.* When I’d been effectively carried back into the throne room by Lefi, Iluna and the wraith sisters had burst into hysterical tears while Shii had tried desperately to use her healing magic on me. The whole scene had been a real exercise in chaos.

I’d found out why everyone had been so anxious from the

relatively calm and composed maids. Turned out that the shock waves that'd been created during my battle with the dragon had made it all the way into the dungeon proper, apparently causing small tremors in the throne room. That was how they'd guessed that I'd fought a massive beast of some sort despite not knowing exactly what it was. The minor quakes coupled with the serious looks on our faces when we'd left the dungeon had already had them tense enough, so seeing me all limp and grungy when we'd gotten back had burst the dam on their nerves. If I put myself in the little girls' shoes, I could totally understand why they'd thought something awful was happening outside.

Tremors, huh? Until I'd found all this out from the maids, I'd just assumed that the dungeon's interior was a completely separate, isolated world, but nope. The fact that the fight outside had been intense enough that the shock waves had made it all the way in here meant that wasn't true. In that case, my guess was that though the dungeon's existence distorted the surrounding space, it was still physically inside the huge cave. Based on that, it made sense that the stuff going on outside could affect the inside.

In hindsight, it probably hadn't been the brightest idea ever to fight so close to the dungeon. Especially because that stupid dragon's attacks had actually been powerful enough to cause part of the cave entrance to collapse. If his charges had been even stronger, it was totally possible the dungeon itself would've caved in too.

Hmm... Might be smart to use the Harden feature on the area directly around the dungeon to keep that from happening. Being buried alive while we were inside was most definitely *not* a laughing matter.

Then there was Rir, who hadn't been able to rush to my side during the life-and-death struggle, which I'll admit was on me. He'd actually tried to come and support me when he noticed the commotion, but I'd used Telepathy to tell him not to. Even though he'd obeyed my order, earnest dude that he was, I suspected that he felt bad about not helping. He'd come as far as the castle to make sure we were okay, then, looking troubled, went back outside just as quickly.

He'd probably been thinking something like, "I have to get my levels a lot higher." If he did, he could eliminate enemies on his own before I even had to get my hands dirty. I doubted he knew it, but his feelings had been so strong during his brief visit that they'd rushed straight into my mind. Don't get me wrong, it made me really happy knowing that he would get stronger, I just didn't want him to go overboard and cause problems for himself.

I made a mental note to myself to go see him soon. Before going, I'd make sure to ask Leila to cook up something delicious I could give

him as a reward. I was sure his followers in the Demonic Forest would be happy with the grub too.

“Yes, truly. Whaddya wanna do, En?”

With En still in my lap as I sat cross-legged on my throne, I peeked into her face, waiting for an answer to my question.

“Then...we stay like this.”

“Huh? Just like this?”

“Yes... I wish to stay with you like this, Master.”

At long last, a tiny smile bloomed on her face. As it did, she relaxed into me, dropping the back of her head onto my chest.

“Grrrr... No fair, Yukiki! I’ve been super worried about you too, you know! You’ve been sleeping foreeeever since you came back, but now that you’re awake, you’re only cuddling with EnEn! That’s! Not! Fair! I wanna cuddle too!”

“I hear ya. Sorry. C’mon over here, Miss Iluna. We’ll solve that issue right now. En, do you mind scooching this way a bit?”

“Okay...”

Iluna launched herself into the space En opened up on my lap. The second she did, a refreshingly cool palm reached up to pat my cheek, making a soft splat.

“Master is all better now? You not hurt?”

“I-I’m fine now. Totally fine. Look. Not even a scratch left.”

It was Shii’s little hand that was stroking my face reassuringly. Even though I’d fully regained my strength, she hadn’t stopped worrying about me. Just like she was doing now, she insisted on confirming my condition for herself.

“I see... But Master hide things like that from us, so I worry.”

“Thank you for worrying about me, Shii. I appreciate it—I really do. But seriously, I’m all good. Great, even. I’ve got sooo much energy now!”

“You are? Really?”

“Really really.”

“Like when you buyed us that funny face?”

“Yup, yup. Heck, I have even more energy now than I did then.”

“Hmm... I glad, then.”

Shii finally decided to believe me, which made her expression a lot calmer.

I almost forgot, but the wraith triplets were in here too, currently floating around the throne. The mischief-loving little girls were unusually docile right now, taking turns staring intently at my face. *Looks like they’re worried about me too.* Surrounded on all sides by little girls, I did my best to handle them all—though it was tough going with so many worried young’uns. Out of the corner of my eye, I saw Lefi let out a long, dramatic sigh as she watched us from nearby,

shaking her head in exasperation.

“To think that *this* is my husband. It shames me to be subject to such a spectacle.”

“Don’t you dare say it. I know damn well how this looks, and *you* know damn well that that’s not how it is.”

I sassed her right back. Secretly, though, hearing her say “my husband” made me stupid happy.

Gotta tell you, folks, a whole helluva lot changed after I beat that insufferable dragon. First, my stats. This was what they looked like now:

Name: Yuki

Race: Demon Lord

Class: Demon Dragon King of Judgment

Level: 136

HP: 19,255 / 19,255

MP: 25,841 / 25,841

Strength: 2,872

Stamina: 3,611

Agility: 2,834

Magic: 4,268

Dexterity: 4,942

Luck: 85

Ability Points: 52

Special Abilities: Demon Eyes, Polyglot, Flight, Indomitability, Ruler’s Might

Abilities: Inventory, Analysis 10, Unarmed Combat 6, Elemental Magic 6, Stealth 6, Scout 6, Swordsmanship 4, Weapon Enhancement 5, Sorcerer’s Grant 5, Traps 4, Greatswordsmanship 6, Camouflage 4, Danger Detection 6

Title: The Demon Lord from Another World, The Supreme Dragon’s Owner, The Adjudicator, Enemy of Humanity, One Who Defies Death, Demon King of Dragonkind, The Supreme Dragon’s Consort
Dungeon Points (DP): 304,356

Yeah. Yeaaaah... You and me both, fam. I got *dummy* strong. That was a thing that happened.

As you can see, my HP and Stamina had shot waaay up. I’d say the reason for those increases was because of my battle against that one zombie. I’d been toeing the line between life and death during that entire fight, just barely surviving the enemy’s countless assaults.

Then, there was the massively insignificant uptick in my Luck

value. While everything else had increased pretty much exponentially, Luck hadn't even crossed into the triple digits yet. *Well, it's better than nothing, so I'll take it.*

In the abilities department, anything and everything combat-related had gone up courtesy of my knock-down, drag-out fight with the friggin' loser-ass black dragon. As an added bonus, I'd picked up two new special abilities: Indomitability and Ruler's Might.

Indomitability: If the user's HP falls below 20%, so long as they maintain their will to fight, damage incurred will be greatly reduced and all stats will receive a 1.5 multiplier.

It was the same special ability that Adamantite-class adventurer—the one I'd fought way back when—had had. *That's quite the effect it's got, though. Can you say OP?* I was pretty sure I'd unlocked it *during* my fight with the dragon rather than after it. Why? 'Cause toward the end of the battle, his attacks hadn't been doing a whole lot of damage even though I'd basically been taking them right to the face, body, and everywhere else. Now that I knew I had this ability, I realized that it was most likely the reason for that.

Ruler's Might: Enemies within a fixed range of the user will be overpowered by the individual's "might" and have their movements dulled. Effects will vary depending on the difference in stats between the user and the enemy.

So. My second new special ability, Ruler's Might. You might be wondering what the heck it is and how I even got it. When I first saw it, I couldn't remember doing anything like what was in the description. Upon closer inspection, though, I figured out that it came as part of one of my new titles.

Demon King of Dragonkind: A demon lord who obtained the King of Dragonkind title by defeating the previous Dragon King. Charisma increases tremendously when in the presence of dragonkind. Grants the Ruler's Might special ability.

Yup. I was the new Dragon King. I could blame my class changing on this new title too. On the surface, those three words on their own sounded pretty powerful. To be honest, though, I wasn't sure it was kosher for me to have this title. Despite being the current Dragon

King, I had zero intention of actually subjugating dragonkind or leading their village. No way, no how. Far as I was concerned, they could do whatever they damn well pleased. It didn't matter to me even a little bit.

Speaking of my new class, for some strange reason, I couldn't see any details about it. Not on the interface or by using Analysis. According to both Lefi and Leila, it definitely did *something*, but nobody knew exactly what. That said, since picking it up, I'd noticed that it was a lot easier to control my movements and that my magic was a lot more powerful. I was *positive* that there was some sort of cause-and-effect sort of thing going on between the new class and my level-up. I wanted to know more about it, of course, but I couldn't figure out a way to verify the particulars, so I just had to let it be for now. Even if my new class was responsible for souping up my stats, I doubted I'd be able to tell the difference anyway since all my other stats had also ballooned.

Moving on, there were two more titles that'd been tacked on to my data.

One Who Defies Death: A survivor of the most extreme conditions. All stats are doubled when HP falls below 10%.

This one was pretty straightforward. I'd beaten that taint of a dragon thanks to his stupidity, but there was no doubt in my mind about the true nature of the fight. I was fully aware that the afterlife had been lurking just beyond the whole time, waiting to welcome me through its doors.

I wondered about the logic behind it doubling my stats, but I couldn't be assed to actually put thought into it since that only happened when my HP dropped below ten percent.

On to the next.

The Supreme Dragon's Consort: A valiant warrior who took the dragon who dominates this world's hierarchy as his wife. In all likelihood, this individual no longer fears anything in this world.

"In all likelihood"? *What do I even say to that?* That last sentence most definitely looked like just some opinion to me. Man, I really, seriously wanted to know who the hell exactly came up with titles for people. Was it God? Was it?! Shiiit. But, uh, yeah, I could feel my face turning red just from looking at this title, so I wouldn't dig any deeper into it.

Right, so DP was up next for discussion. My number had fallen into the hundreds because of how much I'd spent on murdering the black dragon, but converting his dusty-ass corpse into DP had put me right back in...the black. Heh. Insanely in the black too. It chapped my ass to admit it, but his conversion rate alone was proof positive that he'd been a part of the strongest race in this world.

Honestly, though, I was still reeling from how dramatically my stats had changed. Daily life was a challenge lately thanks to the explosive jump in my physical abilities. I'd accidentally break cups and plates by using too much strength. Even just lightly, carefully resting my arms on one of my wooden chairs' armrests would crush them. Anytime I bungled something like that I couldn't help smiling ruefully.

As I was now, I could probably exterminate that goddamn manticore no problem. *Hmm, let's investigate that possibility real freaking soon.* Goddamn right I still had a grudge against it and its kind. My plan to put them on the extinct species list was still a go.

Anyway, the dungeon itself had leveled up by two because of my brutal fight with the dragon. Could that have been another reason for my super-inflated stat increase? Even the DP Catalog had updated. I had to remember to check out the new version in depth later.

There were only two sticking points for me in all of this: after everything I'd gone through, I hadn't evolved racially and my actual level hadn't gone up as much as I'd expected it to. Judging from all my prior experiences, my understanding was that my stat values increased proportionally along with my level. Based on the rate of my progress thus far, I had it in my head that I had a decent shot at catching up to Lefi, maybe even surpassing her, sooner rather than later.

Problem there was that my level was nowhere near what it should've been for taking down an opponent light-years out of my league. If this was all I could expect in terms of how fast I'd level up, I might actually need a whole millennium just to catch up to her. *That's depressing as hell.*

While we're on the topic of stats, I guess it wouldn't hurt to bring up one more change. My Analysis ability was finally level 10, aka it was maxed out. Though I was irked by my relatively low level, a huge leap *had* occurred, which had come complete with a flood of Ability Points. Naturally, I'd spared no expense on getting Analysis to hit the cap.

I still had a good chunk left, but I'd think about how to use them another day. With my ability levels what they were, using my Points right now felt like it'd be a waste even if leveling up abilities was their entire purpose. I was considering saving them for some sort of

emergency or until I'd gotten something to level 8 or 9. It got a whole lot harder to raise ability levels after that, so hanging on to my Ability Points for whenever I hit that difficulty spike would be more efficient and effective.

Back to Analysis. Now that it was maxed out, I could see a *ton* more details whenever I used it. And booyah! That included a better look at Lefi's stats.

Name: Lefisios
Race: Ancient Dragon
Class: Supreme Dragon
Level: 987
HP: ???3?1?? / ???3?1??
MP: ?9???????? / ?9????????
Strength: ?????8?
Stamina: ?7????
Agility: ???1??
Magic: ??4????
Dexterity: ???0
Luck: ???
Title: Supreme Dragon, The Demon Lord's Consort

Alas, good people, little hath changed. Verily. I could see the number of digits, at least, so that had to count for something. Her HP was in the tens of millions, while her MP was in the *hundreds* of millions. I'd bet my left nut that there wasn't a person alive who could shave off even a tenth *of a tenth* of her HP bar. *Holy moly. She might as well be immortal.*

Her other stats were mostly in the hundreds of thousands, with a few exceptions like Magic, which was in the millions. Only two words came to mind when I looked at these numbers—freaking insane. My goal was to be on equal footing with her, but apparently, getting there essentially meant reaching monster status. I'd just have to work my ass off so I could become a monster even a day sooner, then. *On brand for a demon lord, yup, yup.*

It surprised me when I saw that she only had a few dozen abilities to her name. I'd been expecting way more, obviously. All the text was garbled, though, so I still wasn't sure exactly which ones she had. I'd just assumed she had over a hundred, but maybe her mantra was that mastering just a few skills instead of having a whole bunch of mediocre ones would make her stronger? It was also entirely possible that she had a lot more and I just couldn't see them all. I was itching to ask her about them, but I'd rein myself in since I wanted to put in the effort to actually be able to see them for myself.

Last but certainly not least, the only new title I could see.

The Demon Lord's Consort: Demon Lord Yuki's wife. No one in this world could have envisioned the legendary Supreme Dragon accepting a mate.

So much of Lefi's stat page was unreadable, but not this. Odds were good that she'd gone out of her way to set it up like that so others could see it when they used Analysis on her. But that bit made me hot under the collar too, so I'd just leave it alone like I'd done with mine.

I wasn't done talking about her, though. Not a chance. I still had a *lot* more to say on that front. Once I'd woken up from my big, long nap after our return to the dungeon, I'd learned that she hadn't gone into too much detail when she'd told the others about our little adventure outside. Basically, it was up to me to explain to my dungeon's residents what'd gone down—including the fact that we were now husband and wife.

Reactions were about what you'd expect. The two maids shrieked in delight, and the little-girl gang started squealing happily about wanting to be my wife too. I'd more or less expected Iluna, Shii, and the wraith triplets to say something along those lines, but when quiet little En did too, *that* caught me by surprise a little.

I was happy to hear how they felt. I really was. But Mrs. Lefi's smile terrified me in ways I couldn't explain. Plus, the girls were all really young and probably didn't actually know what they were talking about, so I deflected and shut down the conversation with a vague, "Let's talk about it when you're all older, okay?" Future me could solve that problem if or when the time came.

After making such a noncommittal statement, I could feel some unknown force strangling me. It must've just been my imagination. *Yeah, definitely my imagination.* I mean, what else was I supposed to tell the girls without breaking their tiny hearts?

Another thing that'd changed was that Lefi had stopped earning me DP. I was pretty sure it was because the dungeon now saw her as part of my inner circle instead of an intruder. I would've been lying if I said that losing that income didn't sting a little since she'd been bringing home some fat stacks, but it was whatever now that she was officially part of my family. With that having finally set in, I felt a mix of both happiness and embarrassment. Mostly the former, truth be told.

I'd just think of everything before now as an extended bonus period. Sure, I'd been lucky to have gotten all that dough just for letting Lefi exist within my dungeon, but I'd be perfectly fine without

it. All the territorial expansion I'd done so far was keeping my daily DP revenue stream pretty damn high.

"Psst. My lord."

"Hmm?"

Pooped from all the excitement and their usual chatter, all three of the older little girls had fallen asleep. Iluna and En were still in my lap, while Shii snoozed on the floor, reclining against the throne. Having seen this coming a mile away, Leila had set out futons ahead of time, which Lew helped me lay the girls down into before tugging on the hem of my shirt and whispering to me.

"On your finger, is that...?"

Grinning shamelessly, she pointed at something on the third finger of my left hand—a ring.

Engagement Ring: A ring the Supreme Dragon Lefisios put considerable time and effort into creating.

Harnessed Magic: 1,050. Quality: S+.

A simple silver ring with a design very similar to the one I'd given to Lefi during our adventure in Alfiro. A line wrapped around the middle of it and it had a cross-shaped setting in the center, which was set with a beautiful, pale green jewel-like substance. The main difference between this ring and the one I'd given her was that this one was made out of scales, so it didn't have a metallic texture. Because Analysis was at max level, I could see exactly what materials had gone into making it—Lefi's scales, fangs, and a magical jewel she'd picked up from who knows where. She'd made it personally just for me.

Thinking back to when we visited her old nest together a while ago, I remembered her picking up some of her cast-off body parts. *Does this mean she'd been planning on crafting this ring since all the way back then?* I hadn't pegged her as having construction-related skills, but considering that this band had materials from her own body in it in addition to the magic stone, I could see that she'd used her magic to transform it all, with this being the final product. Apparently, dragonkind had a custom where they'd create an ornament like this using their own scales and such to give to their partner as a pledge of their bond.

Because this particular item was made of materials that'd come from the world's strongest being, its quality ranking was an unprecedented S+. On top of that, the ring itself had its own Magic value. That'd led me to test it with Sorcerer's Grant, which was how I'd discovered that it was a top-notch item capable of hosting not one but *two* whole sorcerous circuits. It was so extraordinary that it could

be classed as a national treasure, or even a mythical one. Even the ring the crown prince had worn in the royal capital could only hold one circuit.

Compared to this amazing little beaut, the ring I'd gotten Lefi was an ordinary, insignificant trinket from a bazaar that had no unique characteristics. I felt terrible just thinking about it. But when I'd offered to make her a new one, she'd firmly refused. As it so happened, she loved that ring too much to let it go. *Hmm...why don't I just give her a new one as a normal present, then?* It wasn't like there was some law on the books that only one ring could be given as a gift.

"Weeeellll... Yeah, um... Lefi gave it to me."

"Woow! Excellent work, Lady Lefi. She can be a real go-getter when she wants to be, huh? Geh heh heh! So, my lord lady-killer, how does it feel to have the tables turned on you?!"

"..."

Lew cackled like a maniac while poking me in the stomach with her elbow. Kind of irritated by her attitude, I grabbed her face with both hands and started viciously pinching her cheeks, stretching them every which way.

"Owww?! H-Huts! Dat huts! Haim sh-showee! Haim showeeeee!"

They actually felt pretty good, so I unexpectedly found myself enjoying punishing her. I let myself get carried away playing with her springy cheeks to the point that tears started welling in her eyes.

"P-Pweash no mow! Yu'll rib dem off!"

She desperately whapped at my arms while she pleaded with me. That was when I finally let go.

"Ngh... You're too cruel, my lord. Now my cheeks are all stretched out. How will you fix them if they don't return to their original state?"

Lew massaged her cheeks, rubbing them tearfully. I listened absentmindedly before speaking.

"Hmm... Seventy-five points. Smooth and elastic, your cheeks feel nice to the touch, but they aren't as resilient as I'd like. I recommend you work on that."

"Oh my gosh! Not only do you touch people's cheeks without permission, but you have the nerve to say something like that too?! Could you *be* any meaner, my lord?!"

"What is all this fuss about?"

Dang, we woke the sleeping dragon.

I smirked at Lew's aghast expression, then turned to look at Lefi. She'd gone down for her afternoon nap way before the little girls, and now, she was sitting up in her futon, sleepily rubbing her eyes.

"Yeah, Lew, what is all this fuss about? Keep it down, or else the kids are gonna wake up too."

"What?! This is *my* fault?! I'd like to lodge a formal complaint

against you, my lord!”

Completely ignoring her, I turned to face Lefi again.

“Morning, Lefi. You know, I’ve thought this before plenty of times, but you’re pretty good at sleeping through all kinds of stuff, arentcha?”

“In my human form, my energy output decreases dramatically, so in a sense, that places me in a near-constant dormant state. Ergo, I become sleepy because my body is fundamentally attempting to conserve energy.”

“Ohhh... Wait, what? Didn’t you tell me once that you’d sleep the day away even in your dragon form?”

“...”

“Daaang, woman. You had me going for a second there.”

I laughed wryly when she wordlessly averted her eyes. *It’s okay. I’ve always known that you’re lazy and self-serving.*

“Ahem. Now, then. I shall now be taking my third nap, so please keep the noise to a minimum. Yuki, I suggest you rest as well. You are not yet at full strength, yes?”

Ah, shit. Of course she knows. Because Shii and the wraith triplets, who’d already gone back to the castle, had been extra diligent about keeping a worried eye on me ever since the battle, I’d been saying stuff like, “A hundred times better than before!” to soothe them. But in reality, they’d been right to be concerned. I’d been pretending to be back to my old self so that I wouldn’t stress out the little girls in our home. The truth, though, was that I’d just been grinning and bearing it with my condition.

I still felt extremely sluggish. I had such a hard time moving that I had to force it sometimes, which was a weird, uncomfortable feeling. It was like my body wasn’t my own anymore. The heaviness weighing me down was a lot like how I used to feel whenever I caught really bad colds. But considering how brutal the fight had been, I don’t know what I expected. Get my ass kicked, drink a potion to recover, then go right back to getting my ass kicked. No surprise that cycle of pain had led to this.

“All right. Guess I’ll take a nap too. Leila, can you wake me up in an hour?”

“Understood.”

Once I heard her response, I cheerfully strode to a futon—Lefi’s.

“Yuki? Why are you entering my futon?”

“‘Cause the girls are using mine. See? Don’t wanna risk waking them up by trying to wiggle into it. I’d feel real bad if I did, ya know?”

“Hm... You are right. Fine, come in.”

Lefi sighed when she saw me shrug in defeat. Then, she patted the space next to her inside her futon, inviting me in.

“Many thanks, my dearest wife. Yo, Lew, what’s with that face? You look like you just drank tea with way too much sugar in it.”

“Oh, it’s nothing. Don’t worry about it, my lord.”

Thus, the world around me transformed after my battle with the shitlord that was the black dragon. Mm, on second thought, maybe not so much. Less “transformed” and more “changed eeever so slightly,” I’d say.



“All right, En... You ready?”

“Yes...I am.”

En’s voice sounded a bit more strained than usual, probably ’cause she was nervous about what I was about to do. Once she gave me the go-ahead, though, I pushed *it* into her.

“Ngh...”

She let out a small moan as *it* finally slipped inside her body, and...

Name: Zaien

Race: Magic Blade

Quality: Indeterminable

Power: 962

Stamina: 1,190

Harnessed Magic: 831

Special Abilities: Telepathy, Vampirism

Abilities: Crimson Flame 4, Self-Repair 3,

Anthropomorphization 3, Wind Magic 1

Title: Intelligent Weapon, Demon Lord’s Subordinate, Dragon Slayer

“It worked! Bitchin’! How do you feel, En? You’re not uncomfortable, I hope.”

“I’m fine... It feels nice.”

En, currently in her original sword form, communicated with me via Telepathy. She seemed to be in a good mood, which I was pretty sure was because she could tell she’d gotten stronger. *Whoooeey. That went a whole lot better than I expected.*

Using Analysis on her, I saw that her stats had nearly doubled thanks to A, all the blood she’d sucked from that asshole black dragon, and B, the thing I’d just fused into her—Lefi’s fang. Up until recently, I hadn’t been able to use Weapon Enhancement on anything I’d created with the ability. But that was before I’d leveled it up. Now, I could upgrade a weapon I’d made a single time.

I decided I'd make full use of this new power to mix Lefi's fang with En's sword form since apparently there was nothing in this world her fang couldn't pierce. And the results couldn't have been better. Lefi's body parts really were the best materials, huh? There were no changes to En's look or shape, but it was clear that her blade was much, *much* sharper than before.

Dragon Slayer: A weapon that has sliced through a dragon's flesh and blood, stealing its life. Nothing can defend against this blade. When battling against a dragon, all stats will increase by a multiplier of 1.5.

She'd gotten this new title after killing Gyuohga, of course. For some strange reason I couldn't quite put my finger on, me being the new Dragon King gave me the feeling that we'd be having a lot more dealings with dragons, so the fact that both En's new title and mine came with stat bonuses against dragons...well, it certainly wasn't a *bad* thing in my opinion. You bet your ass I planned on taking full advantage of both.

It was worth pointing out that the second sentence in her new title's description, "Nothing can defend against this blade," was technically not correct. I'd held onto one of Lefi's old scales, and even the newly enhanced version of En couldn't make a nick in it. *So that was a fucking lie. Whatever.*

As for other updates to En's abilities, I'd had her learn Wind Magic. It wasn't a sorcerous circuit but an actual ability I'd given her an Ability Scroll for. To be totally straight with you, there was no point in installing any more sorcerous circuits in her because she could easily read Ability Scrolls herself now that she had a human form. Why waste my time with circuits, amirite? Unless, of course, there was a special trait that she couldn't obtain through Scrolls or something. If we ever ran across that kind of situation, at least we still had the option of a circuit for learning new things.

That was the reason I was leaving En's last two sorcerous circuit slots empty until I'd leveled my Sorcerer's Grant ability up some more. Once I got it a little higher, I wanted to throw some assistive sorcerous circuits that would amplify her stats, skills, and magic on her. Stuff like "Magical Efficacy Increase" or "Physical Attack Power Increase," ya feel?

I'd asked Leila if she could help me with the process. Support-type magic fell outside her area of expertise, she'd explained with a super disappointed look on her face, so it'd take hell a long to even set up the sorcerous circuits. I gave up on the idea when she told me that.

This is my chance, then. What if I just spent all my Ability Points to max Sorcerer's Grant? *Yeah, let's do it.* It'd probably cost me just about all of them, but now was as good a time as any, so I might as well. Decision made, I opened the interface and fiddled with my stats, dumping all my Ability Points into Sorcerer's Grant. It went from level 5 to level 10 in one shot.

Okey dokey, time to see what kind of circuits I can make.

Sorcerer's Grant 10

-Explosive Roaring Blaze

-Inferno Blizzard

-Nightmare

-Magical Efficacy Increase: Maximum

-Physical Attack Power Increase: Maximum

-Self-Healing: Maximum

Daaang... The first three sounded kinda nuts, but I didn't have time to check the deets right now, so I'd give 'em a look-see later. They sounded like the kinds of circuits that'd eat up a buttload of magic with just one use. It didn't make sense to install them in En since she was my everyday weapon. Shitty ROI, IMO.

"En, I'm gonna set up a couple new sorcerous circuits in you."

"Okay...go ahead."

I placed my palms on her blade, then activated Sorcerer's Grant to install the fourth and fifth circuits from the list in her.

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Special Effects: Magical Efficacy Increase: Maximum, Physical Attack Power Increase: Maximum

Awww, yeaah. She's getting stronger and stronger.

By the way, since Analysis was at max level now, I could see other weapons' specs too. When I'd examined all the other weapons I'd stuffed in Inventory, I found that they generally fell into one of these

five categories:

-Junk

Power: 50 to 150

Stamina: 30 to 200

Magic: None

-Average

Power: 150 to 300

Stamina: 200 to 400

Magic: None

-Good

Power: 300 to 600

Stamina: 400 to 700

Magic: None

-Excellent

Power: 600 to 900

Stamina: 700 to 1,100

Magic: Depends on the item

-Legendary

Power: 900 and up

Stamina: 1,100 and up

Magic: Depends on the item

Based on this breakdown, En was sitting pretty in the Legendary category. She might've even surpassed the hero's holy sword. I hadn't been able to see any details about Nell's weapon back when we'd parted up because of the defensive block on it, but now that Analysis was maxed, it was possible that I could actually see more the next time I ran into her. *Nell, hurry up and visit.*

In any case, my ultimate goal was to be the proud owner of the world's strongest sword. She may have been Legendary, but En was nowhere close to being the world's best yet. Stats-wise, she still ranked in the bottom fifty percent of weapons, so it'd be nice if she worked her hardest to help me reach that goal. *Ah, the joy of watching your children grow up.*

I'd just thought of something. Since I was on the subject of sorcerous circuits anyhow, I saw no reason not to install some in the ring Lefi'd given me. Which ones to choose though... I'd go with Self-Healing: Maximum and Magical Efficacy Increase: Maximum. Self-Healing seemed to work by allowing whoever was wearing the

magical item to automatically recover their physical strength whenever it fell too low. With this boost to the ring, my already insanely high HP would be even harder to chip away at. My demon lord strengthening plan was progressing swimmingly, if I did say so myself.

“Okay, En, time to hack at stuff and test out the new you.”

“Yes... I’m excited.”

“Sweet! Be back later, Lefi!”

“Oh? Understood. I shall inform Leila and the others.”

Lefi waved to me as I headed out to the Demonic Forest, carrying sword-form En on my shoulder.



“Ha ha ha! What’s wrong, you giant wastes of space?! C’mon, bring it! I wanna see those cocky looks on your faces again! The ones that made me wanna deck ya!”

While cackling like a madman, I swung En left and right, decapitating the creatures that were trying desperately to escape. High-pitched shrieks echoed all around me, but they were music to my ears as I slashed, crushed, sliced, beat, stabbed, and tore my way through countless monsters. The finishing touch was turning their bodies into charcoal. I trampled my way through the packs of enemies, taking their lives in the process. It didn’t take them long to figure out that they had no hope of defeating me.

Amidst the agonizing cries and hellscape of carnage, I spotted something out of the corner of my eye. A family of monsters was turning tail, trying to run away. Instantly, I whipped out both pairs of wings and flew forward, landing in front of them and effectively cutting off their escape route.

“Tsk, tsk. Didja really think you could get away from *moi*?”

They went into full panic mode when they saw my evil grin. That didn’t stop them from charging me, though. Must’ve still had just a sliver of hope that they could make good on their escape. Sucked for them.

“Too bad, so sad! Save your hope for the afterlife!”

I skillfully dodged their combo attack and chopped their heads off one stroke at a time. Each of their bodies dropped to the ground, never to move again.

“Gawooo!”

A very pissed-off roar reached my ears. Whatever it’d come from was ready to commit some serious violence.

When I turned around, I saw the horde’s boss. It was almost twice the size of all the ones I’d killed so far and very clearly furious as it raced right toward me. I could tell by the look on its face that it was

out for blood, looking to dismember and kill me for slaughtering its comrades.

“Graaahhh!”

I responded to the monster barreling my way with a bellow of my own. For some weird reason, that stopped it dead in its tracks. Also, its angry expression immediately changed to a look of fear. *Ooh. This is dope as hell.* This was the power of Ruler’s Might. Activating my new ability had Boss Man on the verge of shitting its nonexistent pants in terror all of a sudden. Remember when I went to Alfiro after Iluna had been kidnapped? How I’d mixed my insane bloodlust with my magic and spread that killing vibe into the air itself, overwhelming the men who’d surrounded me? Well, Ruler’s Might worked the same way, but a lot more effectively since I didn’t have to put so much effort into creating an intimidating aura. Small fry didn’t stand a chance.

“Hmm? What’s wrong? Don’t go gettin’ cold feet on me, big fella.”

Grinning like some kinda nutcase, I took the most casual stroll of all time toward Boss Man. The closer I got, the more afraid it grew. In its desperation, it whipped its sharp, pointed tail at me, but I’d seen it coming a mile away thanks to my recent upgrades. In a flash, I thrust En between us. It clanged hard against my beloved sword’s blade, but I repelled the attack no problem.

“That’s all you got? Shame. Time for you to die, then.”

My maniacal smirk got even wider when I swung En down. Within seconds, I was the only one left standing in the immediate vicinity. Complete and total annihilation of the nest I’d raided.

“Ahhh... That. Blew. My freaking. *Mind.*”

Surrounded by blood, organs, and corpses, I couldn’t help muttering that out loud. This was bliss.

“Master... Did you have fun?”

“Yeah, tons. I mean, I promised myself I’d destroy every last one of them, didn’t I? *Goddamn*, I feel refreshed.”

Oh yes I did. All the monsters here were ones whose species I’d sworn an eternal grudge against—manticores. When I’d left the dungeon to test out both En’s and my enhanced strength, I’d decided I might as well go big right out of the gate, our current stats being what they were. With that plan in mind, I’d tromped my way into the western part of the Demonic Forest, where the strongest monsters lived. And it turned out to be my lucky day because not long after getting there, we’d found ourselves a den of manticores. Accepting it as a definite sign from whatever benevolent god that it was time to take my revenge against them, I’d joyously launched myself into their swarm and, well, you already know the rest. Before, one mantichore alone had thrashed me and Rir real good, but now, not a single member of their nest had been able to even touch me before they’d all

ended up deader than doornails. *Holy shit, that was a blast. I could get addicted to this.*

Nothing compared to the thrill of one-shotting an enemy so easily. In the back of my mind, I kinda felt like I might've turned into a legit psycho at some point during the massacre 'cause I was on a killer's high... But hey, having a screw or two loose was perfectly fine for a demon lord, na mean?

After separating Boss Man-ticore's head from its body, I took a peek at its stats.

Race: Manticore

Class: Sadistic Beast

Level: 120

HP: 0 / 7,100

MP: 0 / 11,913

Strength: 1,660

Stamina: 1,876

Agility: 2,250

Magic: 2,092

Dexterity: 1,987

Luck: 143

Special Abilities: Magic Defense

Abilities: Earth Magic 5, Torture 4

Title: Leader of the Swarm, One Who Loves Torture

Magic Defense. That had to be referring to that pseudo-AT field it could generate. Manticores must've needed to use some of their magical energy to create their magic-blocking barriers.

Up until just a little while ago, if I'd gone up against a manticore again, my only option would've been to run for my life, but killing an entire horde of them was a piece of cake now. A complete role reversal in terms of power. *Started from the bottom, now we're here.*

Poor, pathetic manticores. If only they'd kept to themselves instead of putting themselves on my shit list... Oh well. Wasn't my problem anymore.

"Yo, Rir, what's with the look?"

"Grr..."

With a wry expression on his face, Rir, who'd carried me all the way here, shook his head as if saying, "Never mind. It's nothing."

Ohhh, I think I get it. Rir had probably wanted to kill one himself since he'd gotten his ass kicked too that first time. Aaand now I felt guilty for taking that opportunity away from him.

"Sorry, bud. If we find another manticore nest, I'll let you be the one to put 'em in their place."

“Grr?”

“I know, I know. You don’t have to say it. Your policy is to not interfere unless absolutely necessary because you respect my abilities. That’s why you just sat back and let me do my thing here, right? I’m pretty positive we’ll come across another nest in need of extermination, though, so just be patient.”

“...”

I needed to be more aware of where I sat in the power hierarchy from now on. As the guy on top, it was super important for me to pay attention to my subordinate’s needs and give him the chance to enjoy himself too. It wasn’t right that I’d hogged all the fun for myself. *I gotta do better.*

“Hmm... Too bad we couldn’t test out your Wind Magic, En.”

“Yes...”

I carried En, still in her sword form, on my shoulder. She sounded kinda bummed, just like me. Playing around with my jacked-up stats had definitely been part of the reason I’d come out here, but my main goal had been to test out En’s upgrades, especially the Wind Magic ability I’d had her learn. There was something I’d wanted to try with it. Unfortunately for us, though, we’d made such quick work of the manticores that I hadn’t had time to experiment with everything I’d wanted to. And with this swarm wiped out, we had no guinea pigs left. That said, I was man enough to admit that me going overboard was the source of our problem.

“Eh, no use crying over spilled milk. We may not have any enemies left, but we can still try it out. Okay, En, just do like I told you earlier.”

“Okay... I will.”

I held En straight behind me, keeping her parallel to the ground. Then, I pushed some of my magic into her and activated Crimson Flame, wrapping the blade in fire. Once I’d done that, En activated her Wind Magic—and I blasted forward like a missile the second I heard what sounded like an explosion behind me.

“Hooooly schnikes!”

I accelerated so much so quickly that I lost control of where I was going and ended up crashing face-first into a tree. It brought me to an immediate stop.

“Oh no... Master, are you all right?”

“Grr?!”

En sounded really worried. Rir did too as he raced over to me in a panic.

“Ooowww...”

I shook my head to get rid of my dizziness while gingerly rubbing my face where it’d smashed into the tree.

That move just now had been a mix of Fire and Wind Magics. My own version of a jet engine, so to speak, where the flames surrounding the blade were the driving force. When they came into contact with Wind Magic's air currents, those currents heated up, causing them to swell and shoot out like a jet in whatever direction the tip of the sword was pointing.

When I'd been in that dogfight with the former King of Dragonkind, my aerial speed had been too slow and I hadn't been able to slice him up. Since then, I'd been wondering if there was a way for me to correct that, and this was the idea I'd come up with—the one I'd wanted to test using En. From that test run, I'd learned that this *was* definitely an acceleration method, but...

“Heh...heh...heh...”

“Master...?”

“Ha! Ha ha ha! So this is the wall that would hinder my dominance?! Fine! Bring it on! I'll become an expert at controlling myself during launch and show the world that nothing is impossible for this demon lord!”

“Then...we're doing that once more?”

“Yeah! One more time! Let's go, En!”

Rir looked astounded as I jumped back up. Brandishing En again, I activated Crimson Flame for our second round of testing.





I was up in the air.

“Wow! Wooow! This is incredible!”

Screaming in excitement, I zoomed across the sky like a jet plane. I was flying a million times faster than I’d been able to with just my wings, to the point that the scenery below me was all just a blur. Of course, that meant the wind pressure was a whole lot stronger too, which made it really hard to breathe, but I’d make that trade any day of the week. *I hope my next racial evolution makes my body way more suitable for high altitudes.*

Repeated attempts of my new jet-engine move had taught me that it was impossible to control my trajectory. How? More crashes and painful tumbles than I could count after a whole bunch of nearly vomit-inducing launches going in all sorts of unintended directions. That was why I’d switched up my tactics and come up with another idea. By securing En to my back so she couldn’t move and spreading my wings as far as they could go, I’d give myself much better speed and attitude control. Several frazzled test runs later and I could manage this new technique fairly well.

Despite having at least a little bit of say in where I went, it still felt like I was on a runaway coaster, so I had to pay super close attention. If I lost focus for even a second, I was sure to veer off in a random direction. It was probably more accurate to say that I was *blasting* through the sky than *flying* through it. But still, while I’d admit that it was definitely haphazard, there was no question that I’d executed my idea.

Heh heh heh... Where there’s a will, there’s a way. Speed like this would’ve no doubt clinched my fight against the black dragon a lot sooner. Which made me wonder, could I keep pace with Lefi now? I’d have to race her soon and show off.

“En, you still good on magic?”

“Yes...I’m fine.”

“Sick, then let’s... Oh ho, good timing. Here comes a test subject—no, I mean, a monster.”

Flying up at us extremely fast was my new target: a wyvern.

“Gugraaar! Gugraaar!”

The defective dragon-looking creature chased after us from below. When the thing’d spotted us from the ground a few minutes ago, it’d let out an ear-splitting screech before taking off. Wyverns were extremely territorial monsters, so this one had probably deemed us invaders as soon as it’d spotted us above its domain.

Since I’d been rushing through the air at an unbelievable speed,

I'd actually left it in my dust. But now, I shut down En's jet-engine function temporarily to reverse course, then reactivated it to beeline it straight for the wyvern.

"Gugrar?!"

Seeing its enemy blazing toward it instead of seemingly running away like it'd been until just seconds ago, Mr. Wyvern squawked in confusion. As the distance between us closed, I prepared to deal my blow with En. I reduced the flame's output and adjusted my stance on the upward swing. Right before her blade made contact, I focused again to make the flames shoot out much more explosively, reverting her to her jet-engine function, and slashed at the wyvern. The recoil from the impact blew me backward several meters, and a moment later, I heard the sound of something bursting and scattering.

"Guhya?!"

Too much power, huh? The wyvern's body had literally exploded where I'd cut it, scattering blood and guts everywhere. Poor thing wasn't even recognizable as a wyvern anymore. It was already super dead, but to add insult to injury, its remains transformed into a fleshy mass of flames and it fell to the ground with a huge, echoing *thud*. A cloud of dust accompanied its unceremonious crash-landing. All that remained in the air was the savory scent of roasted meat.

Well, damn... Even *I* was surprised by the insane attack I'd just invented. Wyverns may not have been all that strong seeing as they were just wannabe dragons, but given the hurting this technique had put on it, it might've even been able to do some serious damage to a much stronger monster. Maybe even one-shot it too, just like it'd done here. I could just imagine a powerful monster's body exploding after taking my hit. *May God have mercy on your freak-of-nature ass.*

"Master..."

"Hm?"

"You...are on fire."

"Huh? Oh, shit! Fuck, that's hot! Shit! It burns!"

Hearing En's words, I finally realized that some of the flames had spread to my clothes, which I rushed to stamp out with my hands. A few of the burning pieces of wyvern flesh had probably brushed against the fabric, catching them on fire too. That explosion had been no joke. The T-shirt I'd bought from the DP Catalog now had a singed hem to go with its mysterious patterns.

I let out a sigh of relief at having prevented a minor disaster, but then a different smell drifted up into my nose. Not one of mouth-watering meat, but of something that was most definitely burnt to a crisp. *What the...?* Puzzled, I looked down to check my surroundings.

"Bwuh?!"

A tower of thick smoke was coming from the trees as they went

up in flames. Apparently, the falling wyvern carcass had triggered the blaze when it'd landed, and fires were spreading throughout the forest below right before my eyes. *Shiiit*. My T-shirt catching had completely distracted me from the descending ball of flames the wyvern had turned into.

To be honest, because I'd been firing off the jet-engine move over and over again, a good chunk of the forest would've been smoldering ruins if it hadn't been for Rir. He'd backed me up this whole time by putting out the fires using his Ice Magic, so I'd left that all to him and merrily gone about my business. In other words, I'd had yet to have a single thought about firefighting. *Seriously, Rir, thanks for everything. You're a real lifesaver and I don't know what I'd do without you.*

"The woods! The woods! The woods are on fire! We don't need no water, let the motherfucker burn!"

"Master...?"

"Sorry, it's nothing. Don't worry about it."

This wasn't the time or place to be saying stupid shit. To make up for that, I used Elemental Magic to make a truckload of water as fast as I could and poured it on the forest. The combined forces of the raging fires and torrential waters had monsters running away in a panic. *Ugh, I'm so sorry...* Today was unfortunately just one of those days for all of us, folks. You know, a fiery wyvern dropping to the ground out of thin air, the forest catching on fire, literal tons of water gushing down from a clear blue sky. Just one of those days, right? Right?!

Anyway, after practically knocking down the trees by dumping an ocean's worth of water on them, I'd finally succeeded in extinguishing the blaze. Catastrophe narrowly averted. Too bad for us, we still had more train wrecks to deal with.

Chitter. Chitter. Chiiitter.

Right as I finished putting out the forest fires, I heard the sounds of an infinite number of bugs creeping and crawling. I shuddered in revulsion, and goosebumps covered my body. With an ominous premonition throbbing in my mind, I slowly, reluctantly turned in the direction the noise was coming from—and saw a swarm of giant ants. Yes, the same ones I'd run into once before.

This area wasn't even remotely close to where Rir and I had run into them last time, so I very much doubted it was the same nest. But that just meant that there were too many goddamn ants inhabiting this forest! An endless amount of the things were streaming in from every nook and cranny. When they spotted me hovering up in the sky, they flew up at me at full speed.

"Eep?!"

That pathetic whimper sneaked its way out of me at the sight of

those ants, each as big as a medium-sized dog, rushing to snap me apart limb from limb. It was entirely possible that their nest had been somewhere nearby and I'd destroyed it with my deluge of water. I was anything but a bug whisperer, and I had less than zero desire to earn that title, but they looked insanely pissed off. Anyone could've felt the rage oozing from the horde as they focused single-mindedly on me, hell-bent on devouring every last chunk of my flesh.

"So many...ants."

"D-Don't drop your guard, En! These ass wipes are *nothing* like normal ants!"

If these not-so-little bastards caught us, we'd be in huge trouble. I wouldn't be surprised if they gnawed us down to our bones like those scarab beetles in Hamunaptra. Their victims' classes changed from "human" to "mummy" real quick, didn't they? Actually, I'd bet good DP that their jaws would even consume bones, leaving no traces of their prey behind.

I'd stiffened up involuntarily at the stomach-churning sight, but just imagining a future where I turned into their next meal was the proverbial kick in the ass I needed. After giving myself a good shake to break me out of my stupor, I turned around and flew away at the speed of light. *As a fish in a movie once said, ess-cah-pay.*

My current stats might've been high enough to make exterminating them a piece of cake, but nah, I wasn't about that life. I didn't wanna slice and dice those creepy-crawlies with En. She didn't deserve that. And frankly, I just couldn't bring myself to do it either. When I'd gone honey hunting with Lefi, I hadn't had a choice in fighting off the gigantic bees, but I was strongly of the opinion that if I had the option of running away, I'd take it every time, no questions asked. Better an alive coward than a dead demon lord, I say.

"E-En! Time to put all that practice to good use! Use Wind Magic!"

"Okay..."

As soon as I used Crimson Flame, En responded by activating her Wind Magic. There was an immediate *kaboom*, and a gigantic rush of energy rocketed me forward. A bunch of ants behind me got caught up in the raging blaze En and I created with our combined powers, their charcoal-crisp remains whizzing down to the ground. Despite seeing their comrades turn to ashes, the rest of the ants refused to give up the chase, but we were going so fast that they couldn't keep up. Eventually, when I chanced a look behind me, they were nothing more than little dots. Then, I couldn't see them at all.

"Ugh. That sucked massive donkey dick."

I let out a sigh of relief and mumbled out loud as I stood in front of the cave. Thank the maker, the huge numbers of red dots on Maps

were super far away now, and Scout had stopped blaring warnings at me too. We'd successfully managed to shake those godforsaken ants. Kinda crazy seeing as the peen-eaters were so fast even Rir hadn't been able to outrun them way back when. If I hadn't mastered my new abilities and techniques, I would've ended up repeating that life-and-death chase. *Them's some scary mofos.*

Speaking of demon lord's best friend, I'd already told Rir that we were back at the dungeon using my Remote Communication ability. I'd also asked him to meet me in front of the cave tomorrow afternoon because I had some business to take care of, so we'd be seeing each other again real soon.

Thinking about it, he had to be the hardest worker in the whole dungeon. I was gonna have to give the guy a chonky raise to thank him for it. Didn't want him going on strike or anything.

"Master...you looked like you were enjoying yourself. At least until this last part."

"Yeah, you're not wrong..."

It was my own damn fault the experiment expedition had ended on such a bad note. I got cocky and reaped what I sowed. I couldn't make any excuses either. *Sorry, En and Rir.*

"I...did too."

She'd taken on her human form by this point and was sitting in her favorite place: on my shoulders. Hearing her soft words, I craned my neck to look up at her questioningly.

"What was that?"

"I...also...had fun...being with you, Master."

The black-haired, kimono-wearing girl squeezed those words out shyly.

Ah, jeez. Why do all the little girls in our family have to be so stinkin' cute? Yukiki here couldn't be happier to know that you're all growing up into such sweet, gentle, adorable kiddos.



"We're baaack."

"We're back..."

As usual, Lefi was lazing about in the living room—not that there was an honest-to-goodness living room in the dungeon; she merely thought of the throne room as such—when the lone door connecting to the outside world opened. Through it walked a young man carrying a little girl on his shoulders. He was Demon Lord Yuki, this dungeon's master as well as her recently wed husband.

The little girl on his shoulders, affectionately known as En, was actually a sword named Zaien. Though she had a human form, in truth, her soul resided within the blade that Yuki still held in one of

his hands.

Having lived for as long as she had, Lefi found it astounding to know that a weapon capable of maintaining a wholly separate form existed. She had become quite familiar with the young man's strange ways, however, so odd occurrences like En no longer surprised her. If anything, she had come to understand why the seemingly impossible managed to become possible when he was involved.

Admittedly, she still found him a profound mystery. Be that as it may, as a result of his regularly eccentric behavior, she had long since grown accustomed to the fascinating enigma she had accepted as a husband. *Perhaps...that is exactly what drew me to him.*

Taking a mate had never occurred to her in any capacity. Yet everything had changed for her after meeting the young man. Compared to her long, long days spent as the Supreme Dragon, her life now was vibrantly painted with all the colors of the rainbow. For the first time, she had learned how vast and joyous the world could be—how wonderful it was.

If she had never met Yuki, she was certain that she would still be cloistered in her narrow, solitary existence on that mountaintop. Having now experienced the richness of what the world could offer, just thinking about returning to her old life made her shudder. *As I am now, I would not be able to again endure such a tedious, oppressive life.* She knew that much for certain.

Realizing the maudlin direction her mind had wandered, she exhaled quietly but forcefully to banish those thoughts. Then, she turned toward the two people who had returned home.

“Welcome back, both of you. Oh, for goodness’ sake, Yuki. Why is it that you alone invariably wind up in such a state of disarray?”

Lefi’s expression was slightly vexed. Though he was a youngster compared to her, he was still very much an adult. Despite that, however, whenever he came back with his clothes tattered and covered in mud, he looked just like a naughty child to her. *And this time, we can add the scent of burning to the list of transgressions.*

Serving only to make things worse was that the little girl’s traditional dress was pristine. It made his unkempt, filthy appearance even more conspicuous. Lefi could understand if he had ended up like this because of a battle with a monster, but the unfortunate truth was that he would come home in much the same condition even after playing outside in the field with the little girls. It wouldn’t be too unfair of her to claim that her husband was a child at heart.

Actually, if she recalled correctly, hadn’t her husband been born as a demon lord only a short while before they’d met? Then, in an extremely technical sense, it wasn’t inaccurate to say he was less than a year old, which would explain the childish sense of reason he

seemed to employ. Even so, the fact remained that physically, he was most definitely an adult man, albeit a young one. *The biology and existence of demon lords are truly mysterious.*

“Uh, well, you see, what had happened was...”

“Master...learned new magic, so he went crazy with joy.”

“Miss En, please!”

En, who usually stared quietly off into space, told Lefi the truth without a second thought. Yuki panically tried to shush her, but it was already far too late. *Ah, I see.* Knowing what she did of her husband, Lefi could easily imagine what he had been up to. Unwittingly, myriad expressions such as exasperation, amusement, and befuddlement flashed across her face.

“Oh, Master Demon Lord, you’re back.”

At that moment, Leila suddenly peeked out from the kitchen, realizing that Yuki and En had returned.

“Ahem... That we are, Leila. Is the food ready?”

“It’ll be just a bit longer. Hmm...En looks fine as she is, but Master, perhaps you might consider taking a bath? You can be out before I finish cooking.”

Leila made that suggestion after scrutinizing Yuki.

“Geh. Yeah, that’s probably a good idea... En, I’m guessing you wanna get in the tub with me?”

He had lifted the little girl down from his shoulders, but when she tugged fretfully on her clothes, he understood right away what she was thinking.

“Yes... Together.”

“Okay, then let’s— Wait, where are Iluna and Shii?”

“I do believe they’ll be returning from the castle soon. I’m almost positive they’ll be covered in dirt and such as well, so I’ll be sure to send them off to the bath when they do.”

“Roger dodger.”

Yuki waved his hand in acknowledgment, then spun around to face the door. After turning the knob several times, he and the little girl beside him went back outside. Hearing that the others would be joining him, Lefi assumed he had elected to go to the inn behind the castle because the small bathroom adjacent to the living room wouldn’t hold them all. The inn was where they had a proper, large bathhouse.

She knew that the door operated using time-space magic by connecting to different locations. Operating the doorknob allowed them to travel to other places within the dungeon that were linked via the door.

“I may be stating the obvious at this point, but that man truly is deft at handling all those little girls.”

“Heh heh. You must be delighted to have such a wonderful husband, hmm?”

“...”

Lefi’s cheeks reddened just the slightest bit in response to Leila’s words. Whenever others called him her husband, it always emphasized to her the reality of their married state, which she still found embarrassing to some degree.

“Truthfully, I’ve never met a man as caring as he is, so I honestly do think you’ve caught yourself a prize gentleman, Lady Lefi. He’s also very strong, yes?”

Although Leila was a unique character who didn’t fit the usual mold of someone in the demon species, she was very much still a member of that category. That was why, in her eyes, strength was one of the most important and fundamental qualities for a prospective mate to have.

“You cannot have him.”

“Heh heh. I’m fully aware that you would never give him up.”

A panicked voice from the kitchen interrupted their conversation.

“L-Leila! I need you to get in here now! The pot’s about to bubble over and I don’t know what to do!”

“Right, then. Lady Lefi, dinner will be ready in less than thirty minutes, so please do take care not to fall asleep again, okay?”

“Understood. Summon me if you require assistance. He will be annoyed with me if all I do is relax.”

“That sounds fine to me. In that case, I’ll give you a shout in just a bit!”

A faint smile on her lips, Leila turned around and headed back into the kitchen. “All I asked of Lew was to watch the pot, and yet...” she murmured to herself.

Silence settled over the living room once more, but Lefi knew it wouldn’t be long before it became lively again. Yuki would return, accompanied by the children, then Lew would set the table in her usual flustered manner, followed by Leila briskly preparing to carry the food in from the kitchen. Once everyone had sat down and said their chorus of thanks, they would chatter about what they’d been doing and what had happened while they ate.

“Heh.”

Was the world always this beautiful?

Lefi smiled to herself as she imagined the very near future, warmth unfurling steadily from deep within her heart.



The day after I nearly burned down the forest.

“Oh, cool, you’re here, Rir.”

He slowly made his way over to me from the depths of the forest. I patted him energetically, getting my fill of his luxurious, fluffy fur for a good while. *Yeah, this fantastic sensation never gets old.* On the road back from the royal capital, I'd buried myself in his pelt and dozed off. Rir was the second-best thing to sleep on, right after Lefi's wing-pillows. *Fluff is justice and I will die on this hill.*

"Shoot, I almost forgot why we're here in the first place. I know I've been going on and on about this forever, but I'm finally gonna summon some new buddies for you. You've got tenure, so look after them, okay?"

"Grr."

Rir nodded in agreement. Reluctant though I was to stop petting his fluff, it was high time I got to the task at hand, so I went ahead and opened the interface. At long last, the day I added to my dungeon home's monster collection had arrived. It'd be my first time summoning anything since the wraith triplets.

This had been on my mind for ages now, but it'd just been one thing after another since the thought first came to me, so I'd kept being forced to put it off. Thanks to all that time to think, though, I already knew exactly which monsters I wanted to summon. *Heh heh heh. My dungeon's fighting strength is gonna double.* I'd be one step closer to my dream of creating the most savage, evil dungeon in existence.

"All right! Time to show yourselves, my once and future pets!"

I opened up the monster catalog in the menu and furiously tapped on the buttons for the ones I had my eye on. Suddenly, a ton of light particles appeared in front of me and Rir. When they came together and the glittering stopped, four monsters stood before us.

One was a massive snake even bigger than Rir. Its whole body was enveloped in lustrous, bloodred scales.

Another was a jet-black crow about Rir's size. It scowled contemptuously at its surroundings with a sharp gaze.

The third was a cat one size smaller than Rir. It was covered in gorgeous white fur, and its tail split in two at the end.

And last was a shapeless water creature. It had a semitransparent blue body like Shii's and was floating in midair.



These were the four monsters I'd summoned—a giant blood serpent, a noir crow, a bakeneko, and a water sprite. Their stats were all pretty much the same, sitting around the 600 mark. HP ranged from 1,500 to 2,000, and MP from 3,000 to 4,000.

Each summon's race affected its HP and Magic to a certain extent, but there wasn't much of a difference in any of their potential. They could also acquire unique abilities depending on their individual race. Plus, based on the details I'd read about them in the monster catalog, they were all capable of major growth. If they reached their final development milestone, aka racial evolution, they'd be on par with stuff from myths and legends.

Thinking about the monster classification system, I was pretty sure these guys'd be considered Calamity-level. Once they attained their final forms, they'd rival some of the foes that'd given even Lefi a hard time in the past. I definitely wanted them to reach that point in their evolution so I could create the world's strongest monster army.

“Waddup, guys?! I'm Yuki, your master! Let's have a killer time together.”

My new pets turned toward me and bowed their heads respectfully, acknowledging my words. *Good, good. They know I'm the boss. What to name them, though...*

“Ah ha, I've got it. In order starting from the left, you're Orochi, Yata, Byaku, and Seimi. Cool? Cool!”

Name: Orochi

Race: Giant Blood Serpent

Special Abilities: Poison Fangs

Name: Yata

Race: Noir Crow

Special Abilities: Clairvoyance

Name: Byaku

Race: Bakeneko

Special Abilities: Conjury

Name: Seimi

Race: Water Sprite

Special Abilities: Water Current Manipulation

These guys are freaking huge, though. Only Seimi, the water sprite, was smaller than me, and only by a little. The other three were way, way bigger than me. Especially Orochi, the giant blood serpent. The

MF could easily swallow humanoid race members in one gulp and still have plenty of room to spare. I'd bet he could even gobble Rir up if he tried hard and believed in himself. Despite their massive frames, though, I could only see them as adorable pets because of how diligently they listened to and obeyed me.

"I want you all to live within the dungeon's territory, hunting monsters and intruders. But I have to warn you that things can get a little tricky here. Some of the monsters are really strong, and I set up traps all over the place too. There are even creatures that you shouldn't hunt. Rir can tell you everything in detail since he's been with me basically from the start. Rir, my man, I'm counting on you to be a good teacher."

Yeaaaah, I dumped it all on him. I was a garbage boss like that. But hear me out: Rir was a lot more suited to combat than I'd ever be, so it was only natural to assign the right person to the right job. Did that maybe make me a *great* boss instead? *Sure, let's roll with that logic.*

Besides, Rir looked totally psyched, which meant the newbies were in good paws. I trusted him to raise them up right. *Work as hard as you want since you're so stoked, dude.* I'd come visit them once in a while to see how things were chugging along.

Speaking of my big, fluffy buddy, Rir's stats looked like this right now:

Name: Fluffrir
Race: Fenrir
Class: Wolf King
Level: 94
HP: 12,030 / 12,030
MP: 19,004 / 19,004
Strength: 2,351
Stamina: 2,902
Agility: 3,277
Magic: 3,004
Dexterity: 2,995
Luck: 149
Special Abilities: Super Speed, Morphing Chains, Body Modification
Abilities: Claw Combat 7, Ice Magic 6, Lightning Magic 6, Danger Detection 5, Fang Combat 3, Leadership 3
Title: Demon Lord's Subordinate, Master of Monsters, The Toiling Wolf

Cheese Louise, he's strong. Right now, my stats were higher than his

purely because my level was. If we were ever at the same level, I wondered if his stats would match mine too even though I'd already undergone racial evolution once *and* had the dungeon helping me grow even more. Also, he'd gone and gotten himself some abilities I didn't know about. Fang Combat and Leadership, eh? I figured he'd gained the latter from commanding all the monsters who'd decided to follow him as their de facto leader. He had a couple new titles too—Master of Monsters and...*The Toiling Wolf*?

The Toiling Wolf: A wolf who has developed an anxious temperament due to the responsibilities he has to both his superior and subordinates.

Well, shit. That's my bad.

"I'm sorry, Rir. I had no idea you were such a worrywart."

It was bad enough that it'd earned him a title, for crying out loud. Boy, did it ever make me feel guilty.

"Grr?"

Rir stared at me in confusion. I reached out a hand and gently ruffled his fur. *I really am sorry, pal. From here on out, I'll definitely try harder to be kinder and more empathetic, so please forgive this good-for-nothing master of yours.* Just as my eyes started watering from imagining Rir's mental suffering, I heard two sets of footsteps behind us, coming out of the cave.

"Oh! There you are, Yukiki!"

When I turned around, I saw Iluna holding hands with Lefi. Seeing them together like that sure was charming.

"Hey, ladies. What's the matter?"

I caught Iluna in my arms as she let go of Lefi and raced toward me. The wifey answered my question.

"Is it not obvious? You said you were summoning new pets and Iluna wanted to see them. Naturally, I could not let her out on her own, what with all the dangers, thus we are here."

In this case, "out" meant the world outside the cave. Just like Lefi said, it was too dangerous out here in the Demonic Forest for the little-girl gang. There was also the whole Iluna kidnapping incident to take into account, so we had a strict rule in place for the girls: they could only go outside if Lefi or I was with them. Not that they ever really asked to come out here, though, since they liked playing in the meadow area a lot more. Still, couldn't be too careful.

"Oh, yeah? I appreciate that. But look at you go. You're getting the hang of this whole 'being a parent' thing, aren'tcha?"

"Pishposh. I have always been an excellent guardian. It is mostly thanks to the overgrown man-child that you are."

“Dang, tell me how you *really* feel.”

I could say the same about her considering all the pain she put me through on the daily. Although I'd concede that she actually *had* always been pretty good at taking care of people for the most part. She'd been looking after Iluna ever since she got here. All the other girls adored her too. The cherry on top was that she'd even started helping out with chores recently. *My wife is such a freakin' catch.*

“My wife is such a freakin' catch.”

“Th-That is far too sudden of a statement!”

“Huh? Ah, crap, did I say that out loud? My bad. It just slipped out.”

“Honestly, how did your mind even wander in such a direction?!”

Lefi's face was beet red as she practically screeched at me. *Cute.*

“Don't you worry your pretty little head about it. More importantly, whaddya think of my new pets?”

Her cheeks still flushed, she cleared her throat to regain her composure before responding to my question.

“So...these are the creatures you spoke to me about some time ago, yes?”

“Sure are. Two of them are the same as monsters you had a tough time fighting in the past. They're still in their adolescent phases, though. The other two are different, but once they become adults, they'll be pretty powerful too. According to the DP Catalog, anyway.”

I was almost a hundred percent positive that the only reason the Catalog even listed a bakeneko as a summon was because it was pulling info from my brain. There were plenty of things in the Catalog that were most definitely not native to this world. Lefi herself had never seen or heard of a creature like Byaku, which was more evidence in favor of my theory. The description for this particular summon stated that once it grew up, it'd become an expert on conjury. I could totally see it chanting “Amaterasu” and creating never-ending black flames that incinerated everything in sight.

“Hmph. I would have expected you to summon yet another wee lass. I am relieved to see that is not the case.”

“I don't blame you. To be honest, I was kinda worried about that too.”

Another little girl at this stage would've overloaded me for sure, so pick a god and thank 'em for small miracles. I mean, I was barely hanging in there with the current band of willful, powerful little girls. Even just one more and it'd be game over for this demon lord.

While Lefi and I bantered, Iluna made her way over in front of my newly summoned pets. Her eyes sparkled with delight as she stared up at them.

“Woow! So cool! So big! And sooo cute! You're Yukiki's new

pets?! I'm Iluna! Nice to meet you!"

Faced with this bold, cheerful little girl, my new pets' reactions were split into two camps. Orochi the red snake and Yata the crow clearly had no idea how to deal with children because they were all sorts of rattled. Then, there was Byaku the bakeneko and Seimi the water sprite. Byaku walked right up to Iluna and gently rubbed its head on her all affectionately, while Seimi bounced around excitedly in the air next to her.

Fascinating. It was easy to tell that my new summons all had their own personalities. Though I could sympathize with Orochi and Yata, I needed them to learn how to interact with kids now that they were part of our family. *It won't be long before the other little girls swarm you too.*

"Ooooh, so sleek!"

Drawn in by Orochi's glistening scarlet scales, Iluna trotted over to it and stroked its body. Orochi, on the other hand, looked around at me, Lefi, and the others helplessly, even more unsure of what to do now that the weird child was actually clinging to it. Its expression had gone from flustered to full-blown panicked.

Just then, probably because it couldn't bear to watch anymore, Byaku headed over to the little girl and giant snake. It inhaled quietly, then let out a "Mroooow." It seemed to be giving some sort of advice to Orochi, who vigorously nodded its head as it listened. Once their conversation was over, Orochi lowered its head toward Iluna.

"Hm? Do you mean you want me to ride?"

"Hsss."

"Yay! Thank you!"

A smile lit up her face at Orochi's affirmative hiss, and she happily climbed onto its head.

"Woow! I'm so high up! I can see the mountains from here!"

She squealed in joy when Orochi raised its head, apparently giving her an amazing view.

"I've known this forever, but there really isn't a whole lot that scares Iluna, is there? I guess she's just got guts like that."

Any normal kid would've needed a change of pants at that height. On top of that, Orochi was huge and had an insanely mean mug, so even a grown adult would've booked it the second they ran into my pet snake. Was it simply a child's innocence, then? Or was Iluna special? *Really makes you think.*

"The easy answer is that she trusts them because they are your pets. Although you two are birds of a feather."

"Huh? What do you mean?"

When I turned to look at my wife next to me, she answered with a shrug of her shoulders.

“You are a king-sized imbecile—er, valiant, rather, for constantly challenging me, the mightiest of the dragons, which happen to be the most powerful among all the world’s races. Having regularly witnessed your ‘guts,’ she has begun to follow suit, in a manner of speaking.”

“Ha ha ha! You’re gonna make my head so big it blows up!”

“I am, in fact, *not* complimenting you. That part of you thoroughly illustrates my point, however. I rest my case.”

“That so? Well, I hope you’re right. It’d make me really happy if you are.”

“Children, especially in their youngest years, are heavily influenced by the adults in their lives. As such, a great deal of you can be found in her. And on that note, overgrown man-child that you are, you would do well to model your behavior after my own. I am, after all, a splendid example of a genuine adult. A fine, logical plan, if I do say so myself.”

“I think you’ve got that backwards, ma’am. It’d make a lot more sense for *you* to learn from *me*. I’ve got book smarts *and* street smarts out the wazoo.”

“Oh? It seems we have conflicting definitions of ‘smarts.’”

Iluna calling out to us interrupted our little back-and-forth.

“Yukiki, Lady Lefifi, look! Look at me! I’m flying!”

In the few minutes since we’d taken our eyes off her, Iluna had hopped off Orochi’s head and onto Yata’s back. They were currently flying in circles directly above us.

“H-Hey, is she gonna be okay up there? What’ll happen if she falls off?”

“Yuki, I command you to fly up there and remain near the bird. I will keep watch from down here. Should it drop Iluna, our dinner tonight will consist of grilled fowl.”

“Hey, now... Much as I love yakitori, can we please not put this particular bird on the menu?”

‘Cause, y’know, it’s my new subordinate and all.

For a good while after that, Iluna kept our anxiety spiked as she played happily with my new pets.

Side Story 1: Soccer

“Rir, pass the ball!”

Rir skillfully used his head to send the ball my way in a cross pass. I trapped it with my chest and let it drop to my feet. Going with the momentum, I hustled down the field, only to be blocked by the strongest opponent of them all, Lefi.

“Bah! Too slow! You are too slow! I will stop everything, including that thing you call a ball! Huh? Where is the ball?”

“Yata, go!”

While Lefi was focused on me, I quickly passed the ball to Yata, shouting at him to take it all the way. He was a bit clumsy about it, but he rushed to catch the ball with his talons. Then, he flew toward the two poles functioning as a makeshift goal and whipped the ball through.

“Hell yeah! Teamwork makes the dream work, folks! You’re slipping, Mrs. Lefi. Slipping, I tell you. You got all cocky, but we still managed to score on you. What it do, boo?”

“Y-You cretin! It is unfair to utilize the sky as part of the playing field!”

“Alas, I find myself inclined to vehemently disagree with you, my good lady. Indubitably, amidst a grandiose match of hyperdimensional soccer such as this, the skies are, pardon the expression, fair game.”

Yup, we were playing soccer in the meadow area. But since not a single one of us was human, what else could I call this except hyperdimensional soccer? This version of the game was absolutely no-holds-barred. If you wanted to, say, light the ball on fire, that was totally legal. And that was just one example; the possibilities were endless. Granted, we did still stick to the fundamental rule of no hands, but Yata had caught the ball with his feet, so no yellow cards here. I liked to think of it as an “anything-goes, fair-play” style of soccer.

You might be wondering why we were playing soccer in the first place. Well, gentlefolk, allow me to enlighten you: it was to deepen our bonds of friendship with our new pets. The setup was fairly simple, but I’d made a proper pitch anyway, with lines drawn on the ground and each side having two poles as goalposts.

The lineup was me and my pets versus Lefi and Lew. Why this extreme team split, you ask? Well, I’d half-jokingly said, “If we’re

playing the Supreme Dragon, we'd be on equal footing if it was all of us versus you." Which, of course, my adorable but simpleminded wife had fallen for. "Hm... Indeed, I do not disagree. Even so, it will still be impossible for all of you to defeat me!" had been her response. *And here we are.*

Oh, as for Lew being on Lefi's team, that'd happened when I told my dearest bride, "Why don't I at least give you Lew as a goalie? I feel kinda bad with you playing all alone." Lefi'd accepted my suggestion, adding, "Generous soul that I am, I will allow Lew to operate as a, what is the word? A 'handicap' for you." The handover'd happened without any regard for Lew's opinion on the matter. So, to the canine maid member of our family who'd not only been tossed on Team Lefi without her own say-so but also treated like a handicap...*godspeed, girl. Live long and prosper.*

One more thing that needed to be made clear—Seimi was benched. We'd tried playing with it on the field, but every time it'd tried to "kick" the ball, it just ended up absorbing it since its body was made out of fluid. Instead, Seimi was acting as our scorekeeper by transforming its body to display the running tally. I'd felt kinda sorry about the situation at first, but once I realized it was having a, ahem, *ball* in its new role, I took it as a, heh, *win*. Not to mention that I'd figured out from its reactions that Seimi had more fun spectating than participating.

"Hrgh... Lew! For goodness' sake, would you please protect the goal properly?!"

"Th-That's just not possible, Lady Lefi! And anyway, why am I the only one being forced to play?!"

"Goodness me. How utterly deplorable to vent your anger on your teammate. Wouldn't you agree, Sir Rir?"

"G-Grr..."

I covered my mouth and pretended to whisper to Rir like a gossiping lady, making sure Lefi heard my bad-mouthing while I did. But he looked horrified as he rumbled uncertainly, his face saying, "Please, *please* leave me out of this..."

"Enough of your prattle! This match has only just begun! Now, we start the next play!"

Lew shakily tossed the ball to Lefi from her position near the goal. My wife made her way to the middle of the pitch, kicking the ball along—then launched her attack, shooting for a goal.

"Hmph! Passing a ball from one to another like sneaky thieves is not in my nature! Now, I shall make you taste defeat!"

The ball sliced through the air, deadass flying at near-supersonic speed. Unfortunately for her, though, our goalkeeper was Orochi, who used his ginormous body to block it.

“Graaaughhhh! Y-Yuki! It is tremendously unfair to have him as your keeper! Hell will freeze over before a ball is able to make it past him!”

“Unfair, you say? No, no, no. You’re mistaken, madam. There’s no rule about size disqualifying a player, so I see no problem here whatsoever! Besides, Lefi, I’ll use everything in my power to take you down! That’s all there is to it!”

“You may think yourself clever with such glib words, but in reality, you are nothing more than a knave! The lowest of the low!”

Sweet, naive Lefi. Didn’t she know that winning a battle meant using any means necessary? *It’s what makes the challenge interesting in the first place, my love.* Buuut...I couldn’t deny that the moment I’d put non-humanoid players on the field might’ve been the moment I’d violated the so-called rules.

“Gaaah! Yuki! I will no longer tolerate your tyranny! This time, I will make certain to deal you a crushing blow!”

“Ooh, the Supreme Dragon’s hammer is gonna come down on me! I’m sooo scare— Whoa, what the hell?!”

Lefi jabbed her finger at me. And then there were tons of Lefis right in front of my eyes. Logically, I knew that she was probably just moving around at an ultrafast speed and that I was just seeing afterimages of her extremely brief pauses, which made it seem like there were a bunch of clones of her, but goddamn was it making me trip balls.

“I-I expected no less of Supreme Dragon Lefisios. Is that what you wanted to hear?! W-Well, I ain’t ashamed to admit it, because that’s exactly what makes you a worthy opponent!”

“Gah ha ha! How much longer do you intend to put up that brave front?! Tremble in fear, for this is your punishment for angering— Bwaaah!”

Her countless copies to my left, right, and above suddenly disappeared. All that was left was the real Lefi, flopped awkwardly on the ground. It didn’t take a genius to figure out what’d happened. All that zipping around in the meadow area and the doofus went and slipped on a patch of grass.

“H-Hey, you okay?”

I felt bad seeing her like that, of course, so I rushed to check on her.

“Fool! You fell for it, just as I hoped!”

“Huh?! You dirty rat!”

Out of absolutely nowhere, she stood right back up. Taking her chance, she rushed away from me and stole the ball I’d left behind in my concerned dash over to her. She was uncoordinated as all hell, but she dribbled her way over to our goal and went for another shoot.

“Despair, you villains!”

Orochi, who was blocking her path, curled his body into a shield to guard against her attack, and....*sproing*. My snake got knocked back, not the ball.

“O-Orochiii?!”

Lefi must’ve put more power behind her kick after seeing him block her earlier shot. Having taken the full brunt of her shot, Orochi and the ball flew a few dozen meters back behind the goal line. He crashed and tumbled on the ground, his huge body causing tremors as it bounced.

Oh, shit. Is he dead? No. No, he wasn’t, thank Jesus, Mary, and Joseph. He wasn’t twitching at all, but he still had sixty percent of his HP. His scales had been blown off where the ball’d made direct contact, though, so I’d have to remember to pour a potion on him later. But ya know, a shot that knocked off forty percent HP was no laughing matter.

“D-Don’t use that homicidal kick again, Lefi! This game doesn’t need a fatality count!”

“Whatever do you mean, dear husband? I kicked the ball following *your* rules—or lack thereof—did I not? And as I have completely routed your team, I hereby declare victory! Fear me, Yuki, for my next target will be your face!”

“Not a chance, woman! That’s totally against the rules!”

“Seems like we both have it rough, huh?”

“Meow...”

Lew and Byaku had apparently developed a sense of camaraderie. And while we did hear what they were saying, neither Lefi nor I reacted. Instead, completely ignoring the game itself, we kept on bickering.

Anyway, I did learn one thing from all that. Hyperdimensional soccer was *not* a viable form of soccer.

Chapter 4: Envoy

“Oh? We’ve got an intruder.”

I was chilling in the throne room like usual when Maps suddenly activated, showing me a red dot. That meant someone who didn’t belong here had made their way in. *What do we have here?* This was the first human-type invader in a while, but I already knew for sure that it wasn’t the hero paying us a long-delayed visit. After the first time she’d shown up, Maps had changed her indicator from enemy red to friendly blue on my command.

I tapped on the dot to read the details.

Name: Haloria Leiroat
Race: Guardian Devil
Class: Covert Imperial Guard
Level: 49

I see, I see. The intruder was a demon, and not one to sneeze at when their level was 49. Based on what I could see of their stats, they were only slightly weaker than the capital’s lady knight, Carlotta. Then there was their class, “Covert Imperial Guard.” From the name alone, I could tell they belonged to an organization that was important to whatever country they were from. A division like that would definitely have high standards of entry for its people. No riffraff allowed there, I bet.

“So what in this world did a covert imperial guard make the trip all the way out here for?”

I watched the footage my Evil Eyes were transmitting to me in real time. Their face covered by a hood, the demon circled the air in my dungeon’s territory, their wings flapping. I could see their head moving to and fro as they surveyed the landscape, clearly searching for something. Shot in the dark, but considering how intently they were investigating the area, I figured they had to be looking for someone in my dungeon family. Other than us, there were only monsters in the region, so the list of options was extremely short.

“Hey, Leila. You know anything about covert imperial guards?”

“Covert imperial guards, you say? All I really know is that they’re intelligence operatives trained from an early age and that they answer exclusively to the Demon King. As far as their actual work goes, I’d

wager that they're involved in murky schemes and dodgy business—things of that nature.”

Leila gave me a nice, thorough response. She'd been nearby when the warning had popped up, so I figured it was as good a time as any to ask.

“HMMMM. Iinch resting...”

Not too different from what I'd imagined. On that note, chances were high that this demon was somehow connected to the jizzface I'd run into in the royal capital. Seemed I'd made the right choice, then, when I'd changed Maps's settings some time ago.

This demon was fairly strong, but to be frank, they were on the weaker side compared to everything else in the Demonic Forest. Before my update, Maps would've had zero reaction to an enemy of this level, but after my return from the capital, I'd adjusted the settings just a bit so that it would warn me about *any* humanoid intruders, regardless of level and race.

It was a necessary move seeing as I'd destroyed that demon's handiwork back in the royal capital. Even though I'd been wearing a mask for the entirety of that incident to conceal my identity, I still had to plan for the worst-case scenario. With the upgrade I'd made, I could handle anything and anyone that came my way.

“May I ask why you're so keen on them?”

“Oh, right, because one is currently an intruder on my dungeon's grounds.”

“Master Demon Lord... I hope you aren't saying that you did something to attract their attention.”

“I'd definitely be lying if I said I have no idea.”

I mean, I *had* cut off both of that bitchbag demon's arms.

“Well, it's quite likely that the Demon King will brand you an enemy of the state if you attack this person, so I *strongly* recommend that you treat them amicably.”

“Yeah, yeah, I got it. I'll do my best. Can't promise more than that, though.”

Then again, it might've already been too late given, y'know, past events. Ahem. In any case, all I could do at this point was guess at what kind of person this particular demon was. If they turned out to be different from what my pessimistic ass was thinking, great! I'd welcome them with open arms. But if they ended up being exactly like I suspected, I'd mark them as an enemy and crush them accordingly.

“Sorry to do this to ya, En, but can I ask you to tag along?”

“Yes...you can.”

She knew just what I was thinking, so she returned to her weapon form and I hefted her onto my shoulder. Using Telepathy, Rir told me that he'd spotted an intruder. I responded with, “I'm on my way to

deal with them, so you be on standby just in case.” And then, I walked out of the throne room.

“Hey there. You’ve been eyeing everything like a shifty creep for a while now. Why dontcha tell me who you’re looking for, yeah?”

“Nh?!”

Once I’d left the dungeon, I’d activated my Stealth ability before taking my wings out and launching myself up into the air. Then, I’d flown over to the trespasser’s location, and, hovering like a sneak right behind them, I spoke into their ear. The hooded asshole jerked around in surprise, reflexively whipping out the dagger strapped to their waist at the same time.

“Hey, now. None of that or your head’s gonna fly off.”

Too bad for them, I’d anticipated their move and placed En’s blade right against their throat. They stiffened up instantly. In the next moment, though, they released their grip on their dagger, letting it fall to the forest floor below.

“Pardon me, but might you be Demon Lord Yuki? The one who foiled the dastardly deeds at Arsil, the capital of the Kingdom of Alisia, that were instigated by the Fiends?”

Oh ho...? Up until now, I’d assumed the demon was a man, but you know what they say about assuming. Yeah, the intruder was a girl. Her body still tight with tension, she questioned me in a slightly high-pitched voice that definitely belonged to a woman. *So the capital’s name is Arsil, huh?* Based on her tone and words, I guessed she was part of a different faction than the demon scumbags I’d dealt with there.

“Maybe, maybe not. How ’bout you tell me what you’d do if I was.”

“...A dialogue. I believe we have shared interests, so I would request a dialogue in order to establish a mutually beneficial relationship.”

Hmm... I didn’t *think* she was lying. Anytime an intruder appeared on Maps, I had it set so those without my express permission to be here would be automatically branded as enemies. My Scout ability was another story, though. It had yet to make a peep. I couldn’t pick up on any hostile intentions from her either. I was suspicious of her solely due to the fact she was a literal stranger, but that was a natural precaution instead of a Scout-related one. For now, I decided she wasn’t an enemy, so I pulled En away from her neck and set her back on my shoulder.

“Keep going. Say I *am* this Yuki you’re looking for. What exactly is in this for me?”

She let out a quiet sigh of relief, then answered in a slightly less

strained voice.

“Information about the enemy who will soon attack you, as well as an alliance with us, enemies of that enemy.”

“Ya don’t say...”

I could feel my eyes narrowing as I listened to her words. *Inch. Resting. Indeed.*

“So, just to confirm, are you the Demon King’s messenger?”

The demon woman, still unaware that I knew about her being a covert imperial guard, was quick to smooth out the shocked look my question had put on her face.

“Mpf... Then you are, in fact, Demon Lord Yuki, yes? As the rumors say, you are very unlike the typical demon lords who are intoxicated by power.”

“I haven’t met any others, so no comment. Anyway, I’ll listen to what you have to say. Follow me.”

I jerked my head in the general direction of the cave entrance, then spun around, flying straight toward it. Out of the corner of my eye, I saw her right behind me. She hadn’t even hesitated to do what I said.

Super random tangent now, but you know the motion I just made with my head? TBH, I’d been wanting to do something like that for a long time now, like some badass, stoic action hero. I was hella stoked to have accomplished that little dream of mine.

After that, I led Little Miss Hood to the same place I’d taken the hero when she first showed up—the room in the inn.

“We’re here. Go ahead and sit down.”

I grabbed a cushion from the stack in one corner and set it down, gesturing for her to take a seat. Then, I picked up another one, gave it a few light wallops, and sat down across from her.

“I-I’m finding it hard to fathom that there’s a meadow and a castle inside this cave...”

Despite being flabbergasted by what she’d seen, she obediently lowered herself onto the cushion as instructed. I was feeling generous, though, so I cut her some slack for all the rapid-fire surprises she’d been hit with. Starting with me sneaking up on her, of course.

The demon lady’d had a sorta derisive look going on when we’d first entered the cave, but as soon as I’d opened the door and she’d seen the castle in the meadow, she’d switched into dumbstruck mode. Her astonished reaction had pleased me, but it’d also made me wonder how she could possibly be good at being an undercover agent or whatever when she had a godawful poker face.

By the way, though I called her Little Miss Hood, she’d actually pulled it down not too long ago. I’d guessed from her voice that she

was pretty young, but now that I could actually see her face, she was younger than I'd expected. She was clearly an adult, yes, but there were still traces of childlike youth in her somewhat rounded cheeks. Fitting for someone on the cusp of transitioning from girl to young woman. That said, she *was* a demon, so there was no telling if she actually looked her age.

She also had two small horns growing out of her head, as well as a thin tail peeking out from underneath her cloak, which I hadn't noticed earlier. As far as physical features went, she checked all the boxes I imagined a demon would.

"I brought tea."

The sliding screen rattled as Leila tugged it open with one hand. In the other, she held a tray loaded with teacups.

"Ah, thanks, Leila."

She really is one hell of a maid. Before leaving the throne room, I'd offhandedly told her that I'd be taking any "guests" to the inn. That was the only thing I'd said, nothing else, yet here she was, already prepared with refreshments. There was no doubt in my mind that if a Maid stat value existed, hers would easily be over 530,000. *Mm-hmm, for sure.* I could just imagine it. If Leila ever turned up the heat and went all out, her power level would go up so fast that a Skouter would explode because it couldn't keep up.

I shook off those stupid thoughts circling the drain that was my mind and refocused on Little Miss Hood—who was now staring at Leila, utterly astounded.

"L-Leila'...? Could you be Leila of the ovine race? The one known as the Inquisitive Ogre?!"

Whaaat?

"Huh? Wait, time out. Do people actually call you that, Leila?"

"The Inquisitive Ogre"... There was no denying that she brimmed with curiosity twenty-four seven.

"Tee hee. How embarrassing to hear the nickname from my youth."

Leila pressed her hands to her slightly blushing cheeks and smiled shyly. *Your youth? Aren't you younger than me?* Actually, on second thought, in this world, she was definitely older than me in all the ways that mattered, especially because, technically speaking, I'd only been "born" less than a year ago.

"I-If I recall, you ventured off into lands controlled by humans to gather medicinal herbs that don't grow in areas where the demons live. But there has been no communication from you whatsoever since you departed. J-Just why is someone of your station feigning being a maid?"

Ohhh, I think I get it now. Leila must've gone on her errand, but

then she was captured by slavers and locked up in that town I attacked. After my raid, she'd decided to stay with me, which brought us to now. The way Little Miss Hood cowered in front of Leila made me wonder if my maid was actually some big shot in the demon world.

"Well, let's just say a lot happened and leave it at that, hm?"

"But, um, I mean—"

"And leave it at that, hm?"

"Is... Is that right? I-I understand, then."

Though she was smiling bright the whole time, there was some power behind Leila's words, especially when she repeated herself. Absolutely bulldozed, Little Miss Hood lost the mental battle with my dungeon's resident scholar and meekly nodded her head in agreement. I was more than a little curious about what'd happened to Leila before we'd met, but my fear of her right now outweighed that desire, so I did the smart thing and kept my mouth shut.

"More importantly, why don't you tell me what business you have with Master Demon Lord—I mean, Master Yuki."

Leila must've intentionally changed what she called me because the demon woman's boss, the Demon King, was probably called something very similar by his subordinates. Speaking of the Demon King, demons had a variety of titles for him—King, Demon King, and also Lord of the Demon World, apparently.

Incidentally, I learned why "demon lord" was its own term too. Historically, a good number of humans would get demons and monsters mixed up because both species came in all sorts of forms. To make things even more confusing, at any given time, there was both a Demon King who presided over the demon world and individuals who commanded their own subordinates in dungeons. Humans had taken to calling that second group "demon lords" because of their superficial similarity to the Demon King. I myself would follow the demons' lead and refer to their leader as "Demon King" or "Lord of the Demon World."

"Oh, yes, of course. I apologize for my oversight. Please allow me to introduce myself first. My name is Haloria Leiroat and I work for the Demon King as a...shall we say, messenger, just like you said."

"Got it. Nice to meet you. And you already know this, but I'm Yuki."

For a little while after I said that, Little Miss Hood stayed silent, perhaps deciding what order she wanted to discuss things in. Once she seemed to have gathered her thoughts, she spoke again, slowly and calmly.

"Then...I shall begin by relating to you the current state of the demon world, the area governed by us demons."



“...And in the manner that we were able to identify this labyrinth’s location, it is likely that the enemy faction will be able to do the same. From their perspective, Lord Yuki, you were responsible for the destruction of not only their plans but also several of their members, so we are all but certain that they will make their move soon.”

“Inch resting.”

I took my sweet time commenting on Little Miss Hood’s information. Nothing she’d said so far was particularly difficult to understand. Simply put, in the demon world, two powerful political factions were at each other’s throats, battling ruthlessly for dominance every day.

First, there was the current Demon King’s camp. Within demon society, they were considered quite innovative and progressive because they opposed the demons’ current value system focused on power supremacy. Sensing the impending doom this long-held principle would wreak on demon society, these folks wanted to use methods other than raw power to deal with the endless strife between them and humans. Of course, they didn’t want the humans to maintain their current winner-take-all trajectory either. Instead, they aimed to overcome the ongoing war through reconciliation and collaboration with other races. Essentially, they hoped to enact policy measures that would unite all demon subraces and other human-type races under one harmonious banner. They thought this approach would prove more effective when it came to dealing with humans.

Then, there was the other side—a conservative faction led by a group of demons called the Fiends. I personally liked to think of them as the Meathead Faction. It was easy to figure these jerkoffs out because there was no real depth to them. Cooperating with other races didn’t even enter their puny brains. They were all in on the philosophy of “might makes right” and wholeheartedly believed that pulverizing their enemies was all that mattered. Adhering to their basic AF motto, there were rumors that they planned to overpower other races since the reality was that demons were much stronger physically on top of having a higher capacity for magic. In short, they were just nasty, unoriginal, evil pieces of filth. The clowns I’d run into in Arsil, the ones who’d orchestrated that entire incident in pursuit of their still unfathomable goals, were part of this faction.

“You sure these guys aren’t just an army of idiots?” When I’d asked her that, she’d explained that there was a family within their contingent who, despite being obsessed with power as the only dominant force, were masters of deception. They were the ones who

had the most influence. Unfortunately, that meant that when it came to the current state of power in the demon world and its insistence on strength, these assholes who considered might to be righteous were stronger than the Demon King and his supporters.

When it came to other species like therianthropes and demi-humans, they would've much rather had the demons as allies than enemies. Those groups were being incredibly proactive in supporting the Demon King's platform. Because of their involvement, there was still a precarious balance of political power between the two sides.

After she told me all this, I couldn't help thinking I wouldn't be too shocked if war broke out on a massive scale. I mean, whatever semblance of peace there was hung on a razor's edge. Right now, each side was up to their own secret shit behind the scenes, with minor scuffles here and there that hadn't escalated to anything major yet. That was true on the surface, at least. But all of that—and much more that I wasn't privy to, I was sure—combined to create a powder keg just waiting to explode in spectacular fashion. I could totally see some random incident being the pivotal, necessary spark, like what'd happened in the Balkans back on Earth. And if the demon world ended up in an all-out war, the Demon King's side would most likely be on the losing end purely because they were already at a disadvantage in terms of power and influence.

No wonder they came all the way out here. The Demon King and his people saw the writing on the wall and were ready to do whatever they could to avoid such a disastrous future. Part of that meant growing their list of allies, even if it was just by one, aka me. My hat off to them for working overtime.

"What do you think, Leila?"

From a seat nearby, she pondered my question for a few beats before replying.

"Well, let's see... The information she relayed is essentially the same as what I gleaned the last time I was in the demon world. I didn't know the antagonism between the two sides had intensified to this degree, but knowing what I do of the Fiends, it's entirely possible that they'll perpetrate more heinous events."

"I see..."

I needed to think quietly for a little while. Honestly, I didn't care which side won. I had less than zero interest in whose sense of values was good or justified. If they wanted to fight, they could have at it; far be it from me to stop them. The only problem was that if what Little Miss Hood had said was true, then these Fiends or whatever were definitely gonna end up becoming enemies that I couldn't just leave alone. Hell, they'd already committed a serious offense in trying to use Lefi as a weapon of mass destruction, and I'd spend the rest of my life

making sure they paid for that.

Even without that black mark against them, chances were high that she was telling the truth about them coming after me in retaliation for killing their comrades. That meant I'd end up crushing them as soon as they got here to protect my family and preserve the peace and stability of my way of life. So as far as I was concerned, they were the sort of enemies that deserved a real up close and personal visit from yours truly. A visit that ended in their deaths.

Again, though, all of this was supposing I believed what she said. Just wanted to slide that note into the appendix, thanks.

"We would very much like to establish a cordial relationship with you since we share a common enemy. Should you agree, it would be a great boon to have whatever assistance you can spare during times of emergency. That is the reason I came here today."

"Hmm... I will say that I understand the case you and yours are making. I'm still not sure whether I can trust you, though. Let's assume that I join forces with you. What's in it for me? Because based on everything you just told me, I get nothing out of an alliance with you."

"Well, the only thing we can offer in exchange is information, as we have them under detailed surveillance. To be perfectly honest, though, we aren't that large of a force. There are limits to what we can provide."

Little Miss Hood pressed her lips together tightly, unable to fully control her nerves.

"Yeah...I figured as much."

"That is one of the reasons we would like you to meet with the King posthaste. If you do, you can further discuss that end of the bargain, and other matters as well. I realize it's presumptuous of us to request such a large favor from you, but we have no other choice. The truth is, the King was actually supposed to make this trip himself, he just couldn't very well leave the country at a time when the situation is so fraught..."

I sympathized since my dungeon was situated in such a remote location. Might as well've been the boonies of this world. It wasn't difficult to imagine just how much time it would take to travel here too. And on top of that, he would have had to contend with the dangers monsters posed. No one in their right mind would willingly put their leader's life in jeopardy like that.

"Do you guys bend over backwards like this for every potential ally?"

I mean, the current Demon King was going all out for little ol' me, so I had to ask.

"As a matter of fact, we don't. The only reason I'm even discussing

everything so openly with you is because we know about you.”

“Oh, reeeally?”

“Demon Lord Yuki, we are aware of your abilities to a certain extent because of our investigations into you. We know that you were responsible for averting a massive crisis in a human kingdom when you put a stop to the Fiends’ cabal unassisted. Additionally, you are capable of surviving in this region, the Demonic Forest, the summit of which is commanded by the Supreme Dragon. Moreover, having established friendly relations with the aforementioned Supreme Dragon, you are now able to broaden your own dungeon’s territory within that legendary creature’s domain. You are truly a force to be reckoned with, Lord Yuki.”



Goddamn. When she puts it like that, I sound like some kind of outstanding individual, which I most certainly am not. I couldn't exactly tell her that everything had played out the way it did purely due to happenstance. Case in point, the "friendly relations with the Supreme Dragon" bit. That was less deliberate politicking and more domesticating her with chocolate.

All that aside, though, they'd really gone hard on their research into me, and I wasn't sure I liked that. It seemed like they still didn't know about our marriage, but at the very least, they'd discovered that she and I were on good terms. Probably found out when they'd dug into the adventure Lefi, the hero, and I had had in that border town, Alfiro. *The covert imperial guards live up to their name, huh?*

"If we can win over someone of your caliber, the King would be more than willing and able to speak to you personally. Should you agree to a conference with him, Lord Yuki, I'm certain that he can put forward what you stand to gain from allying with us."

"Hmm..."

The demon world...

"Sightseeing in the demon world sounds pretty nice."

"I'm sorry?"

"Oh, my bad. Just talking to myself."

With a name like "the demon world," there *had* to be strange and awesome things there. Maybe even the likes of which I'd never seen before. It sounded more than a little fun. Bringing everyone else on this trip was probably on the table here too.

No, wait. Back it up. The instability in the demon world was the reason the King had sent his envoy with an appeal for support in the first place. There was no way I could take the kids somewhere that was on the verge of a civil war. Way too dangerous. All the little girls besides En would be staying in the dungeon. Naturally, that meant Leila and Lew would have to stay behind to look after them. Speaking of Lew, I found her to be much more reliable now that she knew how to do chores relatively well. She was actually a pretty big help these days.

The only one left to consider was Lefi. Personally, I wanted to take her with me because I'd been thinking about going on our honeymoon for the longest time. I couldn't make this decision without consulting her first, though I was pretty confident she'd be excited about it. You see, to my great joy, my wife had become particularly demonstrative with her affections lately, so I was for sure in her good graces. *Our honeymoon. Has a nice ring to it.*

The dungeon's defense was all taken care of too. I'd been busting my ass all this time enhancing protective measures specifically for

times like this. Between all the traps I'd set and my new summons—along with Rir, of course—things would be well taken care of in my stead. Speaking of my buddy, I trusted his ability to kick ass and take names. At his current strength, I was almost positive he could take out any Fiends stupid enough to attack while I was out. As long as no monsters from the Demonic Forest's western region showed up, he could probably handle everything on his own. Still, on the very slim chance that he couldn't, I'd have some things in place as backup. Better safe than sorry.

"Hmm... All right, let me talk things over with the missus and then I'll get back to you."

"Huh?! I beg your pardon, Lord Yuki, but do you mean to tell me that you're married? A demon lord has a wife?"

"Heck yeah I do, and she's the best gosh darn wife a man could ask for. Setting that aside for a minute, what's your next move, Haloria? We probably won't decide what to do about all this until tomorrow, so you can spend the night in this room if you want. Going home to the demon world just to book it right back here tomorrow sounds like a huge hassle."

"Are you certain? I would very much like to rest here if you truly don't mind, especially after the monster attacks I endured on my journey..."

Little Miss Hood said that apologetically. Knowing how aggressive the monsters in the Forest were toward anyone and anything, I could easily imagine them chasing her straight to the dungeon's border. I felt bad for her, so hopefully she'd get some good rest. *You deserve it.*

Random thought just now, but monsters were called monsters precisely because of their inherently savage, indiscriminate natures. Couldn't really blame them for being true to their instincts.

"Okey dokey, glad we're all on the same page. Leila, sorry to dump this on you, but would you mind setting this room up since we have a guest staying?"

"Yes, of course."

"Oh, um, th-that's really not necessary. I'm sure I can manage this chamber on my own—"

"Absolutely not. I refuse to disobey Master Yuki's instructions."

Little Miss Hood rushed to stop the mysteriously famous Leila from performing her maidly duty. Except she was flatly rejected by our dungeon's pleasant, sunny employee—who, by the way, was once again sporting her usual cheery grin. And thus, the day's dialogue came to an end.

That said, something was still stuck in my mind. Leila being the walking dictionary she was, I'd figured it wouldn't hurt to ask her about the covert imperial guard thing when Haloria'd first shown up

on Maps. My question had been pretty lighthearted and I hadn't really expected much, but unlike Earth, where entertainment and information overflowed out of every nook and cranny, this world was fairly lacking in infotech, so it didn't exactly have reliable, solid ways of finding things out. There was no way a supposedly ordinary person should have known anything about an oddly specific, specialized position like "covert imperial guard."

It begged the question, who the actual hell *was* Leila? *The mystery deepens...*



"I will not be going."

"N-No..."

Lefi's nonchalant comment hit me like a ton of bricks. It shocked me so bad that I fell onto my hands and knees, and I could tell I had a look on my face that would've made you think the world was ending. I was clearly taking this way worse than Lefi'd expected, because she rushed over to me in a panic.

"Th-There is no need to be so devastated! The timing simply happens to be terrible."

"What do you mean?"

"Y-You may disregard that. It is my concern. In any case, I shall accompany you wherever you wish to go for your next outing, so I ask that you bear with it on this particular occasion."

"...You promise?"

"Yes, I promise. Now, will you raise yourself off the floor? Please?"

Her hands pressed to my cheeks, Lefi tried reasoning with me like she was talking to a child. A pretty good strategy, really, because I nodded and obediently moved so I was sitting cross-legged. Then, fast as lightning, I grabbed her, spun her around, and sat her on my lap so that her back was pressed against my front.

"Gah! Wh-What is the meaning of this?!"

"Weeell, since you're not coming with me on this trip, I need to fill my Lefi reserves while I still can."

She looked all sorts of flustered as she twisted her neck to gaze up at me. While answering her, I wrapped my arms around her waist in a loose hug. The heat of her body combined with her unique scent drifting up to my nose warmed my heart more than I could put into words.

"Good grief. 'Lefi reserves,' he says. What rubbish."

Smiling ruefully, she huffed in exasperation. Turning to face forward again, there was a soft *thud* as she let her head drop back onto my chest.

Dang it... I knew there was no changing her mind, so I'd do what she asked and put up with it, but I wasn't happy about it. At least I was getting a date out of it, though. And when we went on that date, she'd have to stay with me until I was good and satisfied. It'd be the kind of whirlwind date that'd turn her beet red from both pleasure and embarrassment. *I think, anyway.*

Besides, I felt a whole lot better about the dungeon's safety with Lefi staying behind. Her presence shored up its defenses and then some, basically eliminating the small chance of something going wrong, which was something I'd been worried about. I wasn't a fan of relying on my wife for stuff like this, but I had to think about Iluna and the others too. The little bit of my pride that was outraged by the situation could just put a sock in it this time around.

Lew had been watching us talk with warmth in her eyes. She took the pause in our chat as her chance to speak.

"All righty then, my lord. You'll be away from the dungeon starting tomorrow, right? How long are you staying in the demon world?"

"Hmm... I don't actually know. I'm not planning to stick around that long, but I honestly have no idea how long it'll take either."

I mean, I couldn't even begin to imagine what would happen while I was there since I had zero frame of reference.

"Spitballing here, but I'd say less than three weeks. If it ends up taking longer than that, though, I'll come back here before leaving again."

Either way, I had something that guaranteed my return to the dungeon, so coming home would be easy peasy. I would definitely be stopping in for a breather if those demon pricks insisted on keeping me there too long.

"Are you absolutely certain about this, Master Demon Lord? As far as I'm concerned, you weren't offered anything advantageous enough to make this journey worthwhile. Even if the enemy arrives on our doorstep, I really don't foresee you and Lady Lefi having any issues protecting the dungeon. Wouldn't you agree?"

In response to her line of questioning, I motioned for Leila to come closer. Then, I whispered in her ear so that Lefi couldn't hear us.

"I'ma let you in on a little secret, Leila: I wanna protect *her* too. I'll do whatever I can to make sure I do, even if it means going somewhere she's never been. I wanna get this shit squared away, which is why I'm choosing to go to the demon world."

As long as I had Lefi, I knew I'd be fine no matter who showed up or what happened. But I also wanted to be on equal footing with her. I didn't want to be the only one being protected; I wanted to become strong enough so I could protect her too.

I'd thought it before and it still held true even now, but all I wanted Lefi to do was laze around and indulge herself. Iluna, the other girls, and even the maids were my responsibility. If, Satan forbid, something ever happened to me, the only option I'd have would be to lean on Lefi's power. That needed to be my very last resort, though—one I'd do my absolute darndest to avoid.

That was exactly why I'd started that fight with the black dragon and ended it *on my own* despite almost literally falling apart. Supposing Lefi had decided to tag along with me to the demon world, I wouldn't have gotten her involved in anything serious. I would've wanted her to just relax and play the tourist.

"You just gotta trust me. I can tell by the 'Are you stupid?' look you're giving me—which you're really nailing, by the way—that I'm not making much sense right now, and that's totally fair. When you get right down to it, yeah, I'm just being a stubborn asshole."

"Master Demon Lord, you truly do love Lady Lefi, hm?"

"Yeah. But like, it kinda makes me wanna die when you say it out loud like that, so could you maybe stop?"

Leila wasn't beaming her normal, slightly airheaded smile, which was kinda weird. Instead, she shook her head vigorously to deny my words, her expression seriously impressed by my attitude. All I could do was scratch my cheek out of embarrassment and try to play off the moment.

Actually, even setting Lefi aside as my biggest reason for going, I couldn't let this chance slip. Not only would I have the opportunity to meet directly with the demon world's leader, but he'd also sent me my very own guide. How dumb would I have to be to not jump on this? Sure, Little Miss Hood had admitted during our talk that their faction couldn't offer me much, but I privately disagreed with her. If they could give me solid intel on the numskull Fiends that were my prospective enemies, I'd consider that a huge benefit to me.

Real talk, I'd never been too interested in acquiring allies in the first place. Upping my own power had always been my primary goal, na mean? And as much as it pained me to admit, I was grateful to that dongs-for-brains dragon. Wiping him from existence had given me the confidence I needed in my own strength. I couldn't reject the possibility that there might be a formidable foe within the enemy's ranks. Fortunately, though, based on what Leila'd told me, no one in the demon world had abilities that came anywhere close to the level of dragonkind's. *I'll take my silver linings where I can get 'em.*

I couldn't deny that being outside the dungeon's territory would put me at a distinct disadvantage. I also had to acknowledge that overestimating myself could set a dangerous precedent. Still, after my fight with Gyuohga the Grundle where I'd teetered on the edge of

death, I had this strange confidence that everything would be a piece of cake now. It sorta felt like I was playing the easiest game ever made.

Also worth noting, Little Miss Hood had mentioned that there might be more than just information in it for me if I cooperated with the Demon King's side. Assuming she wasn't lying, I'd take whatever they had to give and then some should the opportunity arise. Neither of us was running a charity, after all.

Oh snap, that's right. He was a king. I'd be cutting a deal with a king. In that case, it might not hurt to demand a completion bonus of piles of gold and silver if I successfully destroyed the enemy's stronghold. Since my potential partner in political crime was a king, it was extremely likely that he would shell out. I could practically *taste* the massive DP payout that was headed my way. Ban-freaking-zai, bruv.

Heh heh heh. Sorry not sorry for being a greedy, materialistic philistine, Demon King.

"Huh? Whoa, Lefi, what's wrong?"

"Hnghhh! Nothing! Nothing at all, you imbecile!"

I asked that because Lefi was trembling in my arms for who knows what reason. In response, she abruptly jerked herself upright and, refusing to look at me, rushed out of the real throne room and toward the castle. *What in the hell just happened?*



The next day.

"All right, I'm off."

"We're off..."

"Okey dokey! Be safe, Yukiki! You too, EnEn and Miss Leila!"

"See you soon!"

"Yuki, I trust you are already aware—"

"Don't be late getting home 'cause I'm messing around with other women? Yeah, yeah, you've said it a million times already. Isn't that why you're making Leila tag along? To keep an eye on me?"

"Lady Lefi, you can rest assured that I'll be keeping a close eye on Master Demon Lord."

Leila inclined her head gracefully toward Lefi, knowing she'd been entrusted with an important task.

After Lefi ran away from me yesterday, she and the other ladies in my dungeon had held a meeting without yours truly. Clearly, they'd come to the conclusion that Leila would be joining me on this trip. Her job would be to monitor me so that I didn't make any moves on other women while we were in the demon world. Surveillance personnel, so to speak.

If my wife was so stinkin' worried, she should've been the one coming with me. That was my initial thought, and I'd actually muttered it out loud, but Lefi'd stuck to her guns, declining the offer and repeating that the timing was inconvenient. She still wouldn't give me a real explanation no matter how much I pestered her either. *Mysterious. Veeery mysterious.*

There was apparently a good reason Leila'd been picked for the job of surveillance officer. Everyone in the little-girl gang was automatically disqualified because they were too young and the demon world was too dangerous. As for Lew, they'd decided that I'd be able to sweet-talk her into looking the other way if I wanted to be a giant, shady piece of shit, so she was out too. The only logical choice, then, was Leila.

Personally, I had serious doubts about how the others in the dungeon would fare without her here. When I voiced my concern, though, they soundly shot me down. They were way more worried about me cheating than their daily lives. And by "they," I deadass meant all of them—Lefi, the little girls, *and* Lew. They'd made it crystal clear where they stood on the topic, so that was that. *I will never understand these chicks.*

Oh, right. En. You're probably wondering where En fell in all of this. Obviously, she was going with me since she was my primary weapon, but she'd been summarily declared unfit for surveillance duty. Because she basically always agreed with whatever I said, it meant I could probably coax her into keeping quiet if I did anything sus.

"Good. So long as you understand."

"Jeez, who woulda thunk I'd snag myself such a worrywart for a wife? Especially when she already knows that I'm a one-woman man with a one-track mind!"

"Y-Yuki! Cease! And desist!"

I swung her up into a tight hug and spun around a few times with her in my arms.

"No fair, Yukiki! Me too!"

"Meee too!"

"Mwa ha ha ha! Your wishes are my command! Get over here, ya rascals!"

I put Lefi down, then scooped up Iluna and Shii as they raced toward me. I whirled them around like a carousel before letting them go and picking up En to do the same thing to her. She hadn't said anything, but I'd noticed the slightly envious look on her face. *She's so easy to read.*

The wraith triplets, who'd come out here to see us off, surrounded us, bouncing excitedly in the air while I acted as a makeshift whirligig

for the older girls. I could feel myself getting dizzier and dizzier as the world around me flashed by in a blur. All that spinning might not've been my best idea.

"Lew, let's confirm your duties once more. You know that you'll be responsible for *all* of my tasks in my absence, yes?"

"Y-Yup! You can totally leave it to me! I'll prove that I'm not just an eternal trainee!"

Despite being slightly overwhelmed by Leila's forceful, pointed smile, Lew pumped her fist and responded energetically. Kinda wack, because while I'd hired them at the same time as coworkers, they were a whole lot more like boss and subordinate. *I feel you, Lew*. She wasn't the only one in the dungeon outclassed by Leila in terms of authority. Ahem.

"Rir, Orochi, sorry to ask, but can you carry us to the halfway point? After you drop us off, I'm counting on you all to protect the dungeon until I get back."

I let go of the little girls and turned toward our family's pets, looking at each of them one after the other. They all nodded obediently. *Good, good*. I appreciated the fact that they seemed raring to follow my instructions and do their jobs. This was their first real chance to show me what they were capable of, so I wanted them to work hard at it.

"Um...shall we get going, then?"

Little Miss Hood quietly cleared her throat before jumping in hesitantly.

"Oh, yeah, my bad. Okay, En, Leila, let's go."

"As you wish, Master."

Waved off by the dungeon's residents, we headed out of the meadow area.

"...They are gone."

Lefi murmured that the moment she could no longer see them.

"Good thing my lord is okay with Leila joining him on his trip, huh?"

"Indeed. Unsurprising, since he is fundamentally a soft touch when it comes to women. Granted, chivalry toward women is a virtue..."

Though she'd essentially forced Yuki to take Leila with him under the pretext of preventing any ill-thought liaisons, it wasn't as if Lefi actually distrusted him. She was well aware of the fact that he considered himself...what was it? "A one-woman man with a one-track mind."

The circumstances were a mite different this time around, however. Per what Leila had told her about his discussion with the

envoy, the other party—that being the Demon King—was bound and determined to gain Yuki as an ally. Evidently, he intended to do so no matter the cost, so there was a strong likelihood that he would be willing to have one of his people attempt to seduce Yuki as a means to reaching his goal.

In the end, men were simple creatures that had a difficult time refusing a woman's approach. Considering that her husband was already weak to women in general, there was a chance of that side of him being used against him. Should he unintentionally give in to his base urges with incessant advances by some trollop, Lefi would forgive him, albeit under a great deal of emotional reluctance. And also after she'd beaten him to a bloody pulp.

But she knew an unfortunate incident like that wouldn't just end there. Her husband was a good man at heart, so he would inevitably take responsibility for any untoward behavior on his part, regardless of any seductive provocations he had been subject to. That meant he would allow himself to be used in penance. While such a chain of events unfolding was extremely unlikely to say the least, she thought it prudent to act cautiously. Her husband being exploited by someone else was far more heinous an act than the man himself becoming entangled with another woman.

Lefi had deceived Yuki by telling him that Leila would be his "surveillance personnel," when the reality was that she had sent the maid along out of concern for him. *In truth, I would much rather it be me by his side...* Unfortunately, she had a good reason for not accompanying him.

If she had been alone, she would have gone with him, but now, she had a cadre of people she could trust—people she could call friends. And within that small circle lay Leila. As long as nothing major or drastic occurred, she could trust Leila to look after Yuki without incident. Moreover, if Yuki inadvertently made advances on Leila should the two end up alone, Lefi could yet forgive him for that. She would rather it be Leila than some unknown harlot. Although his face would still swell to many times its normal size after she vented her fury on it. Yes, even in that case, he would not avoid her wrath.

"But y'know, my lord looked kinda sad thinking you don't trust him."

"Urk... I-I cannot deny that. When he returns, do you think he will like it if I spoil him to no end? Will he forgive me?"

"Mm-hmm. That would totally work since he's so madly in love with you, Lady Lefi."

Lefi blushed slightly at Lew's words, but she shrugged in mock resignation.

"Honestly... Humoring children is such a headache."

“Heh heh. You’re right, my lord does have a childish side to him, huh? Buuut isn’t that exactly what you fell for?”

Her cheeks still flushed, Lefi turned her head to glare menacingly at the smirking maid next to her.

“More importantly! Lew, are you certain you can manage?”

“Yes, ma’am! Leila taught me a ton, and she even left notes for me, so I’m as ready as I’ll ever be!”

“Very good. I have high expectations of you, then. Iluna! Shii! Rei, Rui, and Roh! You will all assist as well!”

“You got it, Lady Lefifi! I’ll do my best!”

“Meee too, Lady Lefifi!”

Iluna and Shii gave her energetic responses. Meanwhile, the wraith sisters, who had finally stopped being afraid of her just recently, showed their enthusiasm by thrusting their tiny fists into the air in a show of vigor. With that, the troops turned on their heels and marched back toward the real throne room, vibrating with energy.



“Uh, Haloria? You okay?”

“I-I believe so... Urp.”

Little Miss Hood, aka Haloria, sounded queasy as she answered me. Her face was pale too. She’d ridden here on Orochi, and it was super obvious that my pet snake’s winding movements had given her a good shake and tied her stomach in knots. Leila, who’d been on Rir’s back with me, was another story entirely. Turned out that she was cut from the same adrenaline-junkie cloth, if the way she’d shrieked in delight the whole time was anything to go by. But Haloria’s reaction was exactly what you’d expect from a normal person. I could totally see why the serpentine mode of transportation would trigger someone’s upchuck reflex.

It is what it is. Not like I could do anything about it. She was the one who’d said it’d take more than a day to reach the closest town in the demon world even if we left the dungeon very first thing in the morning. We were told to prepare for a night of sleeping outdoors.

I’d asked Rir and Orochi to drop us off as close as they could to said town for that specific reason. We’d arrived here just before it got dark, which nixed her camping plan. I was sure she was actually exceedingly grateful to me for speeding up the first leg of the trip. *She did say time is of the essence, so all good in the hood.*

Oh, before we get any further, let me give you some quick background on the demon world. It wasn’t located in another dimension or the underworld or anything like that; it was just what they called the region of the continent inhabited primarily by members of the demonic species. If you headed due east from the

Demonic Forest for a good freaking while, you'd eventually hit the border of the demon world.

Now that that's out of the way, time to return to the story at hand. Once we spotted the town, my two beloved pets dropped us off, then turned right around and headed back to the dungeon together on the same path we'd taken to get here.

Speaking of the trip we'd just made, remember how I said Leila'd been riding with me on Rir? Well, she'd been riding *behind* me, to be exact, and boy howdy had I felt her girl howdies pressing against my back every now and then while Rir was running his heart out for us. My review? A thousand out of ten. Pure. Unadulterated. Bliss. *Left's gonna murder me so hard. Pretty sure I'm a dead man walking.* But I would take this glorious, *supple* memory with me to the very bottom of the grave my wife would personally bury me in.

"Ooooh. So this is what a town in the demon world looks like, eh?"

A while after Little Miss Hood had recovered from her gut-churning ride, she guided us into the heart of the town, where we now stood. I surveyed my surroundings with keen interest, muttering my thoughts out loud. The guards hadn't stopped us on our way in, barely even giving us a single glance, in fact. Unlike Alfiro and Arsil, which had been full of nothing but humans, various species of folks strode around this place as twilight approached.

Dog head. Wolf head. Bird head. People with one horn. Others with two. Lizard-like tails and devil-like tails too. I saw someone walking on all fours and figured that was their natural state, but they suddenly stood up on two legs and walked into a building like it was nothing. Someone else had the lower half of a snake and was just slither-walking along down the street. In short, people of all shapes and forms were weaving their way through this town. The words "miscellaneous" and "unorganized" came to mind when I looked at these people. Which led me to another term that fit them perfectly: "leftovers."

Curious about the classifications, I asked Leila if the ones with animal heads or bodies fell into the therianthrope category. She told me that those with human forms and simple animal characteristics like ears and tails were generally therianthropes, while people with full-on animal heads were classed as demons. "Then wouldn't that make you a therianthrope?" I asked, but nope. Her tremendous proficiency with magic outranked her animal features, so she actually was a member of the demon species. It was all insanely complicated.

So I started wondering, maybe therianthropes and the folks with animal bodies were born somewhere else? Or their ancestors were different species entirely that branched off the family tree in the past?

Hmm... It's possible. I remembered Lew telling me that her race was descended from fenrirs. It had just gone in one ear and out the other as a tall tale, but let's say I believed her now. In that case, therianthropes might've had a beast of some sort as a progenitor, and when that beast suddenly mutated at some point in history, evolution did its thing to create the current iterations of its descendants.

In contrast, demons' origins lie in spontaneous generation, according to what Lefi'd told me way back when. Based on that, I theorized that people with animal heads and bodies might've taken a route similar to demons. Same as with mana hanging in the air that coalesced to create demons, their creation occurred when the condensation of power used an animal in the vicinity as a reference, resulting in a hybridized imitation of sorts. To me, this made more sense than a living being like them popping into existence out of literally nothing.

Hmm, hmm, hmm... Biology and ecology in another world sure are fascinating subjects to think about. But as far as I could see, demons seemed to be the majority here, although there was a decent number of therianthropes around.

There weren't a whole lot of them around, but I occasionally spied dwarves and elves too. Those types fell into the demi-human category. It was my first time actually seeing them in person since being reborn in this world, and they looked just like I'd imagined, which made me kinda happy.

Taking in the sights, I had to rework my own misconception. Up until now, I'd been thinking that there wouldn't be much diversity in the demon world because of the Meathead Faction and the demons' general, historical insistence on power. Since that kind of mentality was still so common in this realm and resulted in exclusionary practices, I was actually really surprised to see so many different species *and* races. I had to wonder, did extremists like those actually not matter? Or was this great variety of people a result of the current king's emphasis on reconciliatory policy measures? There was another, simpler answer too. It could just be that the strong were recognized in the demon world regardless of race or species or whatever.

"Ah! Cat ears!"

A cat girl entered my field of vision. Dressed in hot pants and a T-shirt that showed off her midriff, she seemed to be an adventurer. The cat ears on her head wiggled like actual cat ears, which I found super cute. Thanks to Rir, I pretty much considered myself a dog person now, but originally, I used to be a cat person, so no surprise that seeing that made my day. *Ugh, I really, really, really wanna touch those ears.* I wanted to stroke the crap out of them and fondle them like it

was the last thing I'd ever do.

I just came up with a brilliant idea. When I got back home, I'd make Lefi put on a cat-ear hairband. The DP Catalog would definitely have one if I looked long and hard enough. The cat girl herself had apparently noticed me staring at her—wait, no, at her *cat ears*—while I finalized my brilliant plan. She turned toward me and blew me a naughty kiss.

“Lord Yuki, you *are* aware that if you keep this up, I'll report you to Lady Lefi, yes?”

“Master...adultery is wrong.”

Leila stood next to me on one side, with En on the other, in her human form and holding my hand. They both scolded me at the same time, their gazes full of disapproval.

“Huh? Wait, what? No, this isn't what it looks like! I wasn't staring at her like *that*, okay? A-And besides, this doesn't count as cheating!”

“Hmm... Well, if you say so, then we'll leave it at that. This time.”

“H-Hold on. Just hold on, damn it. I really wasn't thinking of *those* things. So like, don't tell Lefi, all right?”

M-My eyes couldn't help being sucked in by the destructive power of cat ears. That's all it was, Jiminy cricket! Having said that, I'd definitely just killed any argument I might've had for Lefi assigning Leila as my surveillance officer.

I cleared my throat, and, doing my best to pretend I wasn't freaking out inside, I forcefully tried to change the subject with nonsense ramblings along the lines of, “Wow, so her sword, huh? Sure is something. Wonder if it's a legendary weapon.” Then, I turned to Little Miss Hood to further my desperate attempt to get the heat off me.

“Anyway, Haloria, where we stayin' tonight?”

“Oh, yes, right. Um, here are our lodgings.”

She'd pulled her hood up before we'd entered the town because I figured she wanted to hide her true identity or whatever. Looking like she had when she'd first arrived in the Demonic Forest, Little Miss Hood pointed to a building in front of us.

“Huh. Looks pretty normal.”

“Indeed it is, Lord Yuki.”

It was a perfectly ordinary inn resembling one of those old-school, western-style boarding houses. Not particularly big or noteworthy in any way.

“I-I apologize, but this building is currently being utilized by us as an undercover safe house, so...”

“Mm, I see. But seriously, no worries.”

It was my fault for expecting something spectacular just because

of its location in the demon world. Since we were on the topic of towns in this realm, this would be the first of two we'd pass through before eventually ending our journey in the capital, Leigeghegg. Tomorrow morning, we'd head out in a horse-drawn carriage on a regular service route to get to the next town, where we'd also stay for a night.

"Whatever works, just as long as there's a bed to sleep on. Lead the way."

"Understood. Please follow me."

We walked into the inn behind her.

The day after a terrible night's sleep because what do you know, the bed sucked and whatever did not, in fact, work.

"This...is a *horse-drawn carriage*?"

Those words spilled out of me unconsciously as I stared at the vehicle in front of me. The actual coach part of it was nice. Exactly what I imagined one would look like if I pictured a stagecoach. It was larger than I'd expected, but that might've been a requirement since it was used on the regular transport service.

What threw me off, though, was the...horse? Okay, it was most definitely not a horse, so the *thing* tied to it. *How in Beelzebub's name do I describe it?* If I had to pick a word, I'd go with "mammoth," and a massive one at that. It had a super tough-looking shell and breathed heavily as it stood there patiently.

"Uh, are you sure this vehicle is named right?"

Whatever the not-horse was, the fact that it wasn't a horse meant that "horse-drawn carriage" was a misnomer. I mean, it wasn't even a normal animal. Without a doubt, it fell in the monster category. It seemed to be pretty gentle, though, considering how obediently it was waiting.

"Horses were actually originally used to pull the coach, but as time passed, a small number of tribal demon races started expanding into towns and cities. They brought along these companions, what they called Delmel Malmo, thus the beast of burden changed too."

"Fascinating..."

While listening to Leila's explanation, I noticed that En, next to me, was staring at her with deep interest.

"Oh ho, what's this? En, you like history?"

"I do... Leila's stories are always fun."

"Heh heh, thank you very much. Then, En, why don't I tell you about all sorts of things on the carriage ride?"

"Yes, please... I'm excited."

En's usually blank expression brightened a little in delight as she nodded at Leila. It warmed the cockles of my not-so-cold-or-dead

heart whenever she revealed her emotions like this. *A child's smile lights up the world.* While I basked in En's subtle but cheery warmth, Little Miss Hood walked out of the nearby building and toward us. Looked like she'd taken care of the tickets.

"Thank you for waiting. Shall we be off?"

"Yup, yup, yup. Okay, En, up you go."

"Thank you...Master."

Since the entrance to the coach was high, I lifted her up into it. After her, I held out my hand toward Leila, helping her on board too.

"Thank you very much, Lord Yuki."

"You got it."

With that short remark, I leaned En's greatsword body against my seat and pulled myself up, only to see—

"Hey! You're that man who was watching me like a lovesick tomcat yesterday! The one with the kid and the woman with the huge meowlons who got mad at him!"

"I don't like the way you remembered us. Wait, 'lovesick'?! Not in a million years!"

Already sitting inside was the cat lady I'd stared at yesterday.



"Meah ha ha ha! So your wife assigned that maid to keep an eye on ya, huh?! You're a pawsitively sinful man, Yuki!"

The horse-drawn...yeah, whatever, the horse-drawn carriage rumbled along the road, rocking gently. Inside, the cat girl—Naiya—howled with laughter.

"Ha ha... So funny..."

An awkward smile on my face, I couldn't say anything else in response. All of her meows and cat puns so far definitely marked her as a cat person. Well, to be more exact, what I *heard* coming out of her mouth could directly be attributed to my Polyglot ability, and that led to my presumption of her being a cat girl. As far as I could tell, cat people apparently had their own dialect, so this was how Polyglot translated her speech. It allowed me to hear her uniquely feline inflections and such. *Hot damn, Polyglot is frickin' busted.*

"Then does that kitten belong to you and your wife?"

The minute I sat down, En scrambled onto my lap and hunkered down. She was on high alert and had been scrutinizing Naiya, who gestured to her with a grin when she asked me her question, the whole time. I could tell that, in her own little way, En was doing her part as a surveillance officer to prevent me from cheating.

"Yeah, pretty much."

It wasn't technically a lie. Seeing as I'd fused Lefi's fang into her sword body not too long ago, En could be considered her daughter in

a sense.

“I...am Master’s child?”

“That’s how I think of you, En. What, you’re not a fan of me being your dad?”

“I like it a lot. I’m very happy.”

“Whoa, hey, give yourself time to breathe, will ya? But good. Glad to hear it.”

I almost fell off the seat in surprise at her uncharacteristically fast reply. Not a pause in sight. Still, I managed to keep it together and respond. Also, I’d finally realized something about her recently. Though she appeared expressionless on the surface, myriad emotions lurked within her. It honestly just made her all the cuter to me.

“Well, meow. Does that mean you’re not blood related?”

“Let’s just say our family situation is special.”

“Hmm... That’s certainly one way of phrasing it.”

Haloria murmured that from next to me. I ignored her. She knew that En’s real form was resting behind me on the seat.

“Naiya, will you stop poking in your nose where it doesn’t belong? You’re being rude.”

The young girl sitting next to Naiya, Millé, scolded her.

Dressed in a robe and pointy hat, Millé carried an old-fashioned staff with her. Based on her outfit, I guessed she was a conjurer or something like that. She belonged to a race known as “witches,” which were part of the demon species. Apparently, even among demons, witches possessed a considerable amount of magic. But she lacked any of the physical features unique to demons, so if I hadn’t used my Demon Eyes, she would’ve just looked like any normal human girl. Using Earth ages as a frame of reference, my best guess was that she’d probably be a middle schooler?

If I wanted to be a jerk, she *did* have a single unique feature, and that would be her juvenile body. She was as flat as a board and just as curvy. The robe couldn’t even cover up that sad deficiency. But maybe that actually was her defining characteristic. *Who’s to say?*

“Is there something wrong?”

“Oh, uh, just, um...thinking that’s a pretty big staff you got there.”

“Ah, this? It’s a support tool witches receive when they reach the age of majority. We can perform magic without it, but controlling magic is so much easier *with* it.”

“Ya don’t say...”

Is that how staffs work? Neat. Maybe I could make one for myself too. I had a feeling I could pull it off using Weapon Enhancement. Yes, yes, I would have to investigate this new avenue later.

“Wait a sec. ‘Age of majority’? You’re an adult?”

“Hmph. I can guess what you’re thinking by the look on your face,

but I'll have you know that I'm an experienced, adult woman. In case your skull is too thick to understand, though, I'll graciously repeat myself. I. Am. A. Woman."

"R-Right. Sorry. You're a grown-up. Got it."

Millé the lady witch shoved her face aggressively close to mine, forcefully emphasizing her words. A bit frazzled, I nodded my head quickly in agreement.

"Leila, what's the age of majority?"

"Fifteen, sir."

I asked her that under my breath and she whispered the answer into my ear.

Mm, I see. I did, in fact, see. She'd probably been mocked countless times for her extremely childish appearance. And each incident probably made her a little angrier than the one before it, getting worse and worse until it became a festering wound. So the simple fact she was fifteen now allowed her both a defensive and offensive measure against further ridicule, which explained her stubborn insistence on declaring herself an adult.

Take it easy, little witch girl. Back in my old life, a fifteen-year-old would be in either junior high or high school, so there was still plenty of time for her to grow up. As the months and years passed, I was sure the flat-chest and no-curves things would work themselves out too. Probably.

Actually, maybe not. In this world, it was very possible that she'd stay looking like a kid even when she was a full-blown adult and nobody would bat an eye. Like, c'mon, in my own dang dungeon, I had a legendary creature over a thousand years old who you'd swear was a kid based on her looks. So you'd think I would know better than to trust appearances by now. Granted, Lefi was an extreme example, but I wouldn't discount the probability of a race, or even multiple races, that never physically aged despite the passage of time. Not in *this* world, at any rate.

"Tee hee. Witches are a race that don't mature all that much. Aren't they just adorable?"

"Eek! R-Ruène, w-will you s-stop that! Ahhh! Nooo!"

A woman—Ruène—with a sultry voice suddenly wrapped her arms around Millé's body and started feeling her up everywhere. Her race was Tänzer Devil, which was, of course, part of the demon species. Horns grew out of the sides of her head and pointed forward, while a devilish tail curled lazily from behind her. She was a million percent *woman*. We're talking gorgeous, voluptuous, and wearing a revealing outfit that didn't leave much to the imagination.

Time to share the reality of the situation in the stagecoach. There were, as you'd expect, other passengers inside, and all the men's gazes

were drilling into Ruène. A few traveling with their wives took some smacks to the face from said wives because of where their attention lay. The unattached men cursed me viciously with their eyes for being close enough to chat with her. I'd've been deadlier than dead by now if they actually had the power to execute those hexes. All those dudes staring at me honestly made me wildly uncomfortable, so I actually wished she'd do me a solid and put on more clothes or something, like, cripes.

Hey, wait, what did she just say... Taking Ruène's words at face value, Millé was basically done growing. Meaning my last meandering thought on the witch girl had clearly, tragically been spot-on. Oof.

"Wh-What is it? Why are you looking at me like you're pitying me?"

"Stay strong, witch girl. Never give up; never surrender."

"Witch girl?!"

Ruène and Naiya burst out laughing at Millé's astonishment.

Let me give you some background on the trio. They were a party of adventurers who'd been a team for a long time now, and they'd accepted a commission to act as a convoy unit for this stagecoach. Naiya the cat person was their scout, Millé their conjurer, and Ruène their blade dancer. Their jobs were well-suited to vanguard-type missions like this.

When I'd asked Ruène what a blade dancer actually did, she'd told me that they activated their magic by dancing. While they fought their opponents with their swords, their magic forced them into an abnormal state. A blade dancer's skimpy attire made it all the easier for them to cast their magic because their enemy's eyes would end up glued to their body. *Yeah, I bet they get outstanding results.* Especially against men. The ones in this carriage were literal living proof.

Dear reader, you might be thinking that I, too, had fallen prey to Ruène's exposed charms. Well, allow me to disabuse you of that notion, because anytime I tried to sneak a peek at her, En on my lap was ready to cover my eyes immediately. Needless to say, there was nothing to worry about here. I was totally and completely resistant to her thralls. *I say while crying the saltiest, most bitter tears imaginable on Lucifer's green not-Earth.*

Oh, yeah, as far as what was up with these bodyguards being so chatty inside the carriage. So, I'd asked them if they were allowed to be this social, and it turned out that it was just fine and dandy. Apparently, there was another party of adventurers outside properly escorting the carriage, so the two parties rotated convoy duty. This trio of young women would be back on duty not too long from now.

Learning that made me pleasantly surprised to discover that even the demon world needed adventurers. Granted, this particular

jurisdiction was totally different from the humans' in both geography and demographics, but the work itself was essentially the same as that given to human adventurers. I found out from my conversation with them that there was actually a fair number of eccentric human adventurers who deliberately ventured into the demon world seeking greater excitement and, well, adventure than they could find back home. Since the demon world operated on a merit system, even humans were accepted with open arms, assuming they had the strength to prove themselves.

“‘Witch girl.’ ‘Witch girl!’ I despise everything about that! I demand a retraction and revision!”

“Yeaah, okay. I’m sorry... Ahem. You’re a magnificent, mature lady. Here, I’ll give you candy, so cheer up.”

“How are you so incredibly dense and rude at the same time?!”

Sheesh, does she hate candy that much? Fine, then. En could have it.

“Meah ha ha ha! Yuki, you’re hissterical!”

Laughing her butt off, Naiya thwacked me on the shoulder a bunch of times. The carriage continued to sway while we passed the time with our lighthearted banter.

“Whoa, what’s this?”

My Scout ability reacted all of a sudden. A beat later, my super-enhanced demon lord hearing picked up some kind of hullabaloo still a good ways away. I stuck my head out the window, toward the direction of the sounds and Scout’s warning.

“Mrow? There a purproblem, Yuki?”

“Weeell...bandits. I think.”

“Oh, bandits— Wait, are you kitten me?!”

Naiya’s dramatic double take almost cracked me up.

I spied with my little demon lord eyes a nasty group of people on the backs of giant wild boars. They were the size of horses and had thick tusks protruding out of their lower jaws. Meanwhile, though the riders were from all different races, they moved like a well-oiled machine as they spurred their muscly boars to go faster. I could see them getting closer to the carriage. Not long after, they were close enough that the escorts outside had noticed them too.

The adventurers, riding on horses, shouted at the driver of the coach to speed up. In an instant, the vehicle accelerated tremendously. The abrupt, violent jerking motion caused a few of the people inside to let out short yelps.

“Eep!”

“Mrooow!”

“Steady, now, ladies.”

Unable to brace themselves against the impact, Leila and Naiya tumbled toward me. I managed to stop their impending falls with both

my hands. As for where those hands landed... *Alls I gots to say is damn, what an absolutely incredible sensation.* Beyond that, my lips were sealed *real* tight.

“Master...”

En, still seated on my lap, stared up at me super hard.

“Oh, come *on*, En. You can’t blame me for this. I didn’t do a darn thing. It was an act of God or whatever. Totally unavoidable, okay?”

“But...you smiled.”

“Uh, well, that was, um, just the natural instinct of a perfectly healthy man. Yeah, that’s it...”

“Oh, sure, take your time chatting away! It’s not like we don’t have more pressing matters to attend to here!”

Millé shrieked at En and me while we had our casual little talk.

“No, no, you’ve all got me wrong. The way I see it, there’s no point freezing up in fear, right? So I figured that, uh, I figured that I’d just melt away everyone’s nervousness by doin’ my thang, na mean? Na mean?!”

“Master...you can’t fool me.”

“Right. You’re right. I beg for your forgiveness, O mighty En.”

I had indeed tried to pull the wool over her eyes about my ogling because ogling or leering or whatever you wanted to call it was exactly what I’d done. And for that, I was deeply, truly sorry.

“You... You have a method to turn this situation around, don’t you?”

Haloria’s gaze was focused intently on the bandits outside as she asked me that. In her hand, she held a concealed weapon she’d pulled from inside her clothes. This was the first time she actually looked like a covert operative to me. Up until now, I’d been skeptical of her abilities because of her vaguely clumsy bearing, but right here, right now, she looked every bit the badass imperial spy she was.

“I guess I do. They’re just bandits, though, so I doubt I’ll have to go too hard in the paint.”

They seemed stronger than the human bandits I’d taken out on my way back from the humans’ royal capital. Except bandits were weak, good-for-nothing scumbags regardless of species. *Not much of a challenge, I bet.* Then again, there were a lot of them this time around. Forty or so according to Maps.

I didn’t want to waste time waiting for them to catch up because we’d suffer heavy casualties that way. The best option here was for me to be proactive and take the fight to them. And by “fight,” I really meant me slaughtering them.

“Should...I return to my original form?”

“Nah, it’s fine. How about this, En: you protect Leila instead. Here, use this.”

I opened up Inventory and handed her a dagger. Maybe because she herself was a sword, En was stupid skilled with blades of all sorts. Even without Swordsmanship or any blade-related abilities whatsoever, she was a thousand times better than I would ever be. For her, hacking at flying arrows was a piece of cake. One time, I'd even asked her to teach me how to use swords better, but all she'd told me was, "If...you listen to the blade, you'll understand how to use it."

En, please forgive your old man for being too spiritually dense to hear a blade's voice.

"Okay, got it... I'll protect Leila."

"My, my. Thank you very much, En."

She shifted off my lap and into Leila's arms before holding the dagger in front of her, perfectly centered.



Logically, I knew being in that position probably made it easiest for her to protect Leila, but the fact that my little girl looked so dead serious while doing it just made me wanna laugh at what a ridiculously adorable picture she made for. I squeezed my lips together tightly to prevent a smile from slipping, then grabbed the handle above my seat in the carriage and stood up.

“Yuki, don’t! You’ll be putting yourself in jeopurrdy!”

Naiya’s instincts as a guard kicked in and she tried to hustle me behind her, but I wiggled my finger at her and waved her off. “Don’t worry ’bout me,” I said before making my way to the back of the coach. *All righty. Time to send those skid marks into the next world for ruining my chill carriage life.*

I caught an arrow as it hurtled toward me, snapped it in half, and tossed the pieces out through the back. Then, I faced the horde of bandits racing alongside us, stretched out my arms, and activated my magic. The second I did, the ground we’d just passed over started to lift up, undulating as it did.

“Graaawr!”

A massive earth dragon arose, letting out a violent roar and immediately capturing its enemies in its sharp eyes. The process had required a huge amount of soil, so the area around us had basically caved in. Too slow to react to the abrupt change of terrain, the leading pack of bandits stumbled and crashed violently down into the pits along with their boars. Not long after, the ones bringing up the rear, who also couldn’t react in time to stop, either collided with their comrades or went ass over head into the holes. That alone wiped out a good number of the brightly flashing dots on Maps.

“Eat shit, assholes. Fall off your boars.”

As for the ones still alive, my earth dragon bared its fangs, opened its mouth wide, and swooped down to swallow them whole.

“Wh-What the heeell?!”

“R-Run! Run for your lives!”

Those who survived falling into the craters scrambled to get away. At the same time, others who’d barely managed to stop their boars in time to avoid fatal collisions literally turned tail and tried to escape. Too bad my dragon was faster. It raced along the ground with its huge maw open wide, swallowing any and all bandits in one long gulp. Then, it commenced its massacre by crushing its victims inside its gigantic body. The agonized screams of the damned reverberated across the land, and the rest of the red dots on Maps all flicked out of existence.

After rampaging for a while longer and gobbling up any stragglers, the earth dragon finally rested and allowed its body to

disintegrate back into the ground, the bandits still inside it. It didn't take long for the area to return to its normal state, like nothing out of the ordinary had even happened. The chasms disappeared as great swathes of soil settled back into their original locations. Stillness and quiet fell in the wake of the dragon's departure. The bodies on the ground lay motionless.

I'd annihilated the bandits with a single move.

"Mwa ha ha ha! Whaddya think of my new magic, Leila?!"

"Splendid, Lord Yuki. I think it's splendid. You have again increased your fearsome repertoire of powers, hm?"

"I agree... Good job, Master."

I'd developed that bit of earth magic after my dire fight with that bitchass dragon. Originally, I'd thought it up as a way of restraining massive enemies like that mofo, but its real application was a lot more all-purpose. I could either create huge hollows in a wide area of my choosing or straight-up devour enemies. If I went with option two, those eaten by the earth dragon would be suffocated to death from the weight of the soil.

This magic is actually really fucked up if you think about it... Eh, served the bandits right since they were unquestionably worse. From the flashes of their data I'd seen, they all had an array of crime-related titles like "Murderer" and "Robber," so it wasn't like they had any extenuating circumstances for me to consider. Bandits must die. Expect no mercy.

Due to how ridiculously friggin' enormous the thing it made was, my earth dragon magic consumed a buttload of MP with just one use. Lucky for me, that was no problem at all now thanks to my ridiculously high stat value. I could easily do that ten more times and still have plenty to work with. I was basically a walking artillery that could rain down earth dragons like hellfire.

Why'd I pick a dragon for my earth magic too? Because dragons were cool, duh. Did I need another reason? That was just how I rolled, and anybody who was surprised by an answer like that at this stage in my brand-spankin'-new life hasn't been paying attention.

Pest extermination complete, I turned around to head back to my seat in the coach—only to be met with everyone inside staring at me, their mouths dropped open in complete shock. *Mwa...ha ha... Mwa ha ha ha ha ha! Yes! Yes, plebes! Revel in the power of the greatest demon lord you'll ever meet!*

You know, there were a lot of protagonists in a lot of stories that hid their powers for reasons like "I don't want to create an uproar," or "I don't want to stand out." Then, of course, there was the stereotypical development where they'd eventually be forced to reveal themselves despite having said stuff like that, ending those dramatic

episodes with more corny-ass lines like “I didn’t intend for any of this to happen...” and blah, blah, blah. That crap was a dime a dozen.

Me, I’d always wanted to tell those clowns to get over themselves and also to miss me with that titanic load of whale jizz. And then, I’d teach them the following lesson: being a man meant going balls to the wall and unapologetically showing the world exactly who you were. In order to be cool, you had to *act* cool.

That was what it meant to be the creature known as a male. That was the pride of a male. And that was the romance in being a male. A true man who understood this fundamental tenet of the male existence would not only win the hearts of women, but the hearts of other men too.

Heh heh heh. Do you understand now, friends? If you really want to be a smart, cool guy like me, you need to live by prioritizing those ideals. Don’t let your dreams be dreams.

“Lord Yuki, we are all profoundly aware of your incredible abilities, so you may want to consider subduing your expression. You see, it’s perfectly clear what you’re thinking right now...”

Whoopsie. My bad.



“Yuki, are you purrhaps an amazing conjurer from some mysterious place?! I’ve never seen meowgic on such a massive scale before!”

“I concur. I don’t know anyone back in my village who could use magic like that so easily.”

“Millé, my sweet, I couldn’t agree more.”

The adventurer women chatted after sitting down near us again.

Bwa ha ha ha ha! Yes, sing my praises from the reaches of heaven all the way down to the depths of hell, ladies! I made sure that my elation didn’t show on my face, of course, though. Had to play it cool for the fans, y’know? And by “fans,” I specifically meant En, who was back on my lap and completely zoned in on my facial expressions. I couldn’t afford an out here; I needed to make sure the ump ruled that I was safe.

If I slipped up now and she thought I was acting like an arrogant jackass just to impress the adventurers, I was sure she’d hate my guts for it. The shock from that would have me laid up in bed for a week like some Victorian maiden. I was *not* about that life.

So, on that note, I kept the straightest face I could manage and shrugged my shoulders humbly.

“No, no, it’s nothing like that. You’re all way too kind. But hey, don’t let *me* stop you from laying on the compliments.”

Oh, son of a— Running my mouth like that was seriously gonna be

the death of me. Now that the...cat...was out of the bag, I *definitely* came off as an arrogant jackass, which sucked a whole lotta butt because I wanted En to see me as a considerate, dependable dad who was also super cool. I'd have to try even harder to embody the perfect father—the cheerful, grinning type who took his kids to the park on his days off. Ergo, I cleared my throat to gloss over the awkward moment and plastered a gentle smile on my face before speaking again.

“Ha ha ha! Really, though, I’m not that special.”

“Begging your pardon, Lord Yuki, but I think it’s a biiiit too late to cover your tracks at this point.”

“Master...your face is very easy to read.”

Whaaat?! The refreshing smile on my handsome mug isn’t working on them?!

“Lord Yuki, though you may appear to be a serious, responsible person when you interact with Lady Lefi and the girls, the reality is...well, you and Lady Lefi are two peas in a pod, no?”

“Hey, I object to that! I don’t just *appear* serious and responsible, I *am* those things! I totally have my act together!”

Lefi and I are two peas in a pod? Get the heck outta here. I was in love with her, yeah, but I sure didn’t remember turning into a useless doofus like her.

“Umm...right. Right, of course. Whatever you say, sir.”

Miss Leila? Why are you looking at me with those amused, indulgent eyes? She was just humoring me, wasn’t she?

“Meah ha ha ha! You’re a purretty darn funny guy, Yuki!”

Naiya whacked me on the shoulder while she busted a gut. I didn’t really care, but wow, it was *not* hard to make her laugh. Easily amused like a typical cat, I guess, since she’d been laughing like a hyena for practically the entire time I’d known her.

“N-Never mind her, Yuki. I’m curious about something. I noticed that you didn’t chant a spell earlier, so how were you able to execute that level of magic? Do you have some sort of special technique?”

“Whoa, Millé, gimme a little breathing room, will ya?”

“You’re...too close.”

The witch girl had grabbed my other shoulder and shoved her face right in front of mine, her intense eyes seeking answers. In response, En pushed her away, creating much-needed space between us. No surprise that someone from the witch race would be deeply intrigued by anything related to magic.

“Right, back to your question. I wouldn’t really call it a special technique, but I guess I just...use a lot of...spirit? Energy? Something like that.”

“Hmm... I...think I understand. Yes, I think I do. After all, magic

was as easy as breathing to demons of eld. It was second nature to them, so it stands to reason that a strong spiritual connection would be the key to producing silent magic like you did. The state of magic has become quite theoretical due to the dominance of sorcery and its study, so it might be best if I reviewed older literature and documents to analyze the system of magic in place in the past. That should allow me to better understand how to use chantless magic, and then I can..."

I smiled wryly as the witch girl continued muttering to herself. A second later, some*things* lush and pillowy pressed against my arm, cuddling it.

"Yuuku, daaarling, you're *quite* powerful, hmm? I was sooo surprised."

"Oh, uh...thanks?"

Ruène squished my arm to her chest while she snuggled flirtatiously into me.

"You know, I'd *love* to get to know a strong man like you so much better. What do you say we become friends? Really. Good. Friends."

The seductive smile she was giving me from way up close and her *decidedly* womanly body pressed against mine combined with her words to send a lightning bolt through me. My heart rate skyrocketed for a not-so-itty-bitty moment. *Warning! Warning! Exercise caution!*

Having basically only met little girls up until now, let's just say that I wasn't as immune to an *actual* adult woman trying to wile me with her big ol' charms as I would've liked to be. *Ngh... Calm down, dillhole. Gotta think with the right head. You got this.* I was a man who could not only resist but also deny temptation. Woosah.

I'm in love with Lefi. I'm in love with Lefi. There's no woman for me except Lefi. I'm in love with Lefi.

"Stop it..."

While I waged a fierce mental battle with myself, En did what I was too weak to. She forcefully shoved Ruène off me now that the woman had pretty much draped herself over me like a second skin. Then, my sword girl grabbed my head, squeezing it tightly, and scowled ferociously at her. She was marking her—and my wife's—territory, I guess.

"Awww, what a shame. But I tried."

Snickering softly at the sight of me being protected by such a small bodyguard, Ruène allowed herself to be pushed away.

Hoooo, boy... Thanks for saving my bacon, En. I sure was glad I'd brought her along because holy schmoly had that gotten dicey. If it'd just been me and Leila, I doubted that vixens like this one would get ward off so aggressively. I needed someone here who'd do that, which was why I totally didn't regret that my arm wasn't all snuggled up in her vixens anymore. Didn't feel even an ounce of sadness. You

have my word that that's the honest truth. Trust, okay? Damn. *But damn...*

"Aaanyway, do those bandits mean it's not safe here in the demon world?"

I asked that question to Little Miss Hood, who was sitting near us, after the situation—and, uh, I—had calmed down a bit. There'd been no warning at all that the bandits were gonna come at us like that. The losers had charged in like they owned the freakin' place, for crying out loud. It made me wonder if they'd been on the lookout for caravans and such traveling the main highway. Their group had been pretty big, so maybe they pillaged and rampaged on the regular to maintain their organization.

"Things haven't always been like this, but they are just more evidence of the overall instability in the demon world at present. There's been a significant uptick in reports of banditry and other villainous activities because of the deepening animosities in our society, and we haven't been able to mobilize troops against such blatant wickedness because we've decided to keep them on standby for true emergencies. That has clearly resulted in evildoing running rampant, however, so we only have ourselves to blame for this awful situation."

Her expression was anguished as she replied. *If the leaders are in chaos, then the people will be too, huh?* Made sense. I was even more glad now that I hadn't brought Iluna and the others.

Don't get me wrong, I totally still wanted to take them sightseeing in the demon world at some point in the near future, but outside of Lefi, I just couldn't drag them around in a dangerous place. Point being, I'd do what I could to help these guys clean up this mess and restore law and order here. *Time to work hard for my kids' sakes.*

Chapter 5: The Demon King

Later on the same day the bandit brigade had attacked, we'd arrived at the second town, where we'd stayed for a night. It was evening of the next day now, and we were enjoying a pleasant ride on the stagecoach. No bandits or anything eventful today. Just the peaceful, rhythmic swaying of the carriage.

"Ooh. So this is the capital of the demon world, eh?"

We were finally here—Leigeghegg. My first impression was that the way all the streets wound through it reminded me of a maze. I almost gave myself a headache trying to make sense of them. Plus, the city wasn't built on flat ground, so roads could start up super high and end way down low or vice versa. The only straight road was the main one, which we were currently passing through.

Next up, the architecture. As far as I could see, no two buildings constructed along this main street had the same design. Each one looked like it'd been built to suit its owner's individual style. Despite the chaos in appearance, for some strange reason, it all fit the capital's vibe. Everything meshed together really well in a weird way, and I found that fascinating. The whole city seemed to be giving the middle finger to the entire concept of zoning laws and urban planning, declaring itself a "massive cosmopolitan maze." And at its heart stood a castle. The demon capital's royal castle, to be precise, which just so happened to be our final destination.

What a great view. Lit up by the setting sun, the labyrinthine cityscape glowed red. I could feel excitement flowing through me at the sight. It almost seemed like the road we were traveling on was a secret path or something. I definitely would've gotten lost here without a guide.

"Bye for meow, Yuki! You're a cool cat, and I'd sure be happy if we could meet again! En and Miss Maid too! Make sure you keep a supurr close eye on him!"

"I hope we can discuss magic again sometime soon, Leila!"

"Mm, take care, everyone. Especially *you*, strong man."

And so, the adventurer lady trio departed as they got off the stagecoach. They planned on staying in the capital for a while longer and accepting another commission from the adventurers' guild here. The journey was fun thanks to them. I myself meant to check out the guild in the demon world, so I definitely wouldn't mind hanging out

with them again if the opportunity presented itself.

We disembarked not long after they did, at a nearby military post. There, Little Miss Hood rented us an animal that looked a lot like a huge capybara. We all got on it and made our way through traffic. In the saddle designed to carry a few adults all at once was Little Miss Hood up front, then Leila, and me bringing up the rear. En was sitting on my lap. *Yes, yes, very fluffy. I like this fluff. But nothing could ever beat Rir's fluffiness!*

"Oh, yeah, Leila, have you ever been here before?"

"On a few occasions, yes. For my research."

"Nice. Speaking of your research, what exactly do you specialize in? Magic?"

"Well, yes and no. Magic is, of course, a part of it, but I don't like to engage exclusively with one area."

Ahhh, okay. She let her curiosity decide which direction to take her studies in. Roger that.

"You may not be aware of this, but Leila is so renowned in her field that anyone who *doesn't* know her is ridiculed as having lived under a rock. You cannot even begin to comprehend how outstanding her theses are."

Little Miss Hood turned half around to glare derisively at me. Between the look on her face and her words, she was not-so-subtly implying that it was a travesty that Leila worked as a maid now. *Look, lady, it isn't like I forced her to do it, so get off my back.* Clearly, Leila's decision to stick around was a result of her curiosity, which meant that once she'd gotten her fill of us, she might pack her bags and head for greener pastures. I knew I couldn't and wouldn't stop her if or when that day came, but thinking about it still made me kinda sad.

"Hmm? Is something wrong, Lord Yuki?"

"Well...I just got to wondering if you'd leave after you got what you wanted out of your time with me and the others, and it had me feeling a little down."

"Tee hee. You have nothing to worry about on that front. I highly doubt my curiosity will be sated so long as I remain in that endlessly fascinating labyrinth of yours. So please, do allow me to stay in your employ, won't you?"

"Uh, what exactly are you so fascinated by though...?"

"That's my little secret."

She pressed her index finger to her lips and gave me a big, captivating smile.



Haloria and I walked down the long, wide, well-furnished corridor, with her leading the way. The demon world's royal castle

was silent, emanating a lonely aura that was completely opposite the hustle and bustle outside its walls. I couldn't sense anybody nearby, and it made me wonder if maybe there weren't that many people working here to begin with.

Okay, that was a bit of a lie. I actually knew that two people were following us. The fact that they'd skillfully masked their presence had me thinking they were Little Miss Hood's colleagues in the Covert Imperial Guard. And yes, that "skillfully" was sarcasm. My Demon Eyes didn't miss squat, and these guys were no exception. Honestly, it was kinda funny how surreal this whole "they try to stay invisible while I pretend not to see them" thing was to me.

Side note, Leila and En weren't with me right now. There was no need for them to be there when I had my audience with the Demon King. Plus, they'd been exhausted after the long carriage ride, so I'd seen them off to the room in the castle we were being put up in. En in particular had been mega tired considering that she'd conked out on my lap halfway through the capybara ride. I'd only realized it because she hadn't said anything in a while. *Her sleeping face was so freakin' adorable.*

"This way."

Little Miss Hood gestured at a set of massive double doors in front of us. Gargoyles stood on either side of them, functioning as sentries if the magic circulating inside them was any indication. Their stone bodies made grinding, rumbling sounds as they slowly turned toward me. Her presence made them lower their guard, though, and they just as slowly returned to their forward-facing positions as sentinels before they once again stopped moving.

She herself didn't so much as glance at them, I guess because she was so used to them. That said, she *did* do something in front of the doors that caused them to swing open inward. On the other side was a deep, wide throne room bathed in shades of black and red.

Fiendish, menacing statues that seemed like they'd jump at you at a moment's notice lined both sides of the long, red carpet stretching all the way to the back of the room. *I wonder if they're countermeasures against intruders.* Just like with the gargoyles outside, I could clearly see magic swirling within them thanks to Demon Eyes. I figured they actually moved when faced with real enemies. Golems like these were probably placed in strategic locations all over the castle, which might've been the reason I couldn't really sense anyone else in the place.

"You *must* be Demon Lord Yuki, yes? I am Fynar, Lord of the Demon World. I'm *very* much looking forward to making your acquaintance."

Seated on the throne in the furthest reaches of the room was a

young man, beaming from ear to ear.

Name: Fynar Regnerius Saturnia
Race: Weiser Daemon King
Class: Demon King
Level: 39
HP: 71? / 71?
MP: 2,4?5 / 2,4?5
Strength: 301
Stamina: 3?0
Agility: 297
Magic: 5??
Dexterity: 454
Luck: 2?1
Special Abilities: Foresight, Observation,
Accelerated Thinking
Abilities: Parallel Thinking 8, Prediction ?,
Leadership ?
Title: God's Agent, Genius Tactician, Heaven-Sent
Strategist, Blackheart

That was *not* what I'd expected the Demon King's stats to be. Dude was *hella* weak. He was definitely using some high-quality magical tool to block what was visible, though. That was the only explanation for all those oddly random question marks. And despite his numbers being slightly higher than a human warrior's, he was still below average compared to what I'd seen of the demons in both towns we'd passed through and in the capital. Talk about subpar.

His skills and titles were another story, though. Those put serious emphasis on his presumably fearsome ingenuity. *Ah ha. So this guy's the type of king who puts all his eggs in the tactics basket.* Based on those factors alone, it was easy to figure out that he was a capable leader. Buuut I could also see why he'd be unpopular with the majority of demonkind. Strength was what they valued most, after all.

Then there was that Blackheart title. *Hmm... Might be in my best interest to not put too much faith in him.* His good looks were the final nail in the trust coffin, so yeah, I'd be keeping my cards close to my chest, thanks. *Friggin' fairy tale prince-lookin' ass. Douchebag alert.*

"My lord, I have returned."

"Well *done*, Haloria. You *really* saved my neck here."

"Think nothing of it, Your Majesty!"

After glancing to my side at the kneeling Little Miss Hood, I turned my attention to the pretty-boy king sitting on his throne in front of us.

“Sooo...you’re the one who summoned me here?”

“That I *am*. You don’t *know* how *incredibly* happy I am that you made the journey *all* the way out here. Perfect timing too, so *many* thanks.”

His tone and manner of speaking were extremely casual, and that radiant smile of his never wavered. But frankly, I was seriously grossed out at having a man grin cheerfully at me like that, so I wished he would stop.

Wait, what does he mean, “perfect timing”? Before I could voice my question, the Demon King spoke.

“Honestly, I’d *love* to chat about all *sorts* of things with you, but, well, you must be positively *exhausted* from your long journey, so let’s just cut to the chase. What do you think?”

“Works for me.”

Though my demon lord body was outrageously tough, I would’ve been lying if I said I wasn’t a little tired. I definitely wanted to get some R and R. The sooner, the better.

“I think you’ve *already* speculated on *why* I invited you, but I’ll be *crystal* clear just in case you have *any* doubts. Your *power* is the reason, Yuki. You’re *quite* strong, aren’t you? Case in point, you fought off a *dragon*, didn’t you?”

Well, well, well. Could he see my data? Or did he find out another way? *Time to ask.*

“Here’s a question for you instead: exactly how much do you know about that?”

“Not *much*, really. *Other* than the fact that a *few* of the Fiends’ underlings *tried* to maneuver an alliance with the dragons and things *didn’t* pan out for them. Turns *out*, the dragon who *killed* the previous Dragon King *skipped* off to parts unknown *without* consulting *anyone* after taking the proverbial throne.”

Oh, yeah, that cum stain of a dragon *had* mentioned something about followers or subordinates or some BS like that. Maybe he’d actually been referring to the Fiends when he’d said that and not other dragons.

“To be on the *safe* side, I *admit* that I kept a *close* watch on this *new* Dragon King. *Except* he didn’t make *any* moves *whatsoever* after landing in the forest where *you* just happen to live, Yuki. I found it *hard* to believe that *all* of my people missed seeing such a *massive* individual *leaving*, so I’m *guessing* his final resting place lies *there*.”

“So, what? You think *I’m* responsible? Wouldn’t the logical conclusion here be that the Supreme Dragon living in that forest took him out?”

“I considered *that* too, of course, and it’s *definitely* a *strong* possibility.”

The Demon King nodded in agreement before continuing.

“But I’d like to tell *you* about one of my *subordinates* who possesses the *Analysis* ability. They *diligently* worked on *raising* their skill high enough that even the *strongest* opponents’ information *should* be visible. So *imagine* my surprise when they *came* to me and told me, their face *pale*, that they couldn’t see *yours* at all. *That* led me to *conclude* that perhaps *you*, Yuki, were the one who *defeated* him. What I *don’t* know, however, is whether you *always* possessed such power or if you *obtained* it after defeating a *dragon*—a member of the *strongest* race alive. *Surely* you see the very *interesting* conundrum I’m *dealing* with here?”

Ohhh... They’d seen—or rather, they *hadn’t seen*—my stats, huh? *That’s how they figured it out.* Other than my name, I used Camouflage to obscure the rest of my stats, so the fake data was what they should’ve seen. Based on his explanation though, whoever his subordinate was, they’d seen through the disguise and found to their horror that they couldn’t see my real stats. Made sense since Analysis was level-dependent. Thinking about all the people I’d encountered in the castle thus far, they wouldn’t have been able to see jack without their own ability being at a super high level.

“Even *supposing* you didn’t *actually* beat the dragon, you still possess such *tremendous* strength that my *subordinate* couldn’t *analyze* it. If *you* were in *my* shoes, wouldn’t *you* want, well, someone like you as an *ally*?”

“Ya know, I definitely have a much better idea of why you summoned me now. Another question from me, then: with a brain like yours, can’t you just take out your enemies by yourself?”

“Ah, I see *you* have Analysis *too*, huh? Then let me make something *else* clear. I’m *not* actually much of a Blackheart. I *know* I’m weak, which is why *instead* of confronting things *directly*, I work *behind* the scenes. But *before* I knew it, I’d ended up *slapped* with that title.”

Fynar shook his head in exasperation, his whole attitude oozing, “The *nerve* of whoever *did* that, painting *me* as some *evil* man. Goodness *gracious*.” Problem being, my gut told me that he might actually be a wicked dude, so Blackheart was spot-on IMO.

“Well, I *won’t* deny that I *excel* at working in, shall we say, the *shadier* sides of life to get what I want. *Trapping* my opponents, sowing *discord* in their ranks to get them to *kill* each other, and *more*. I can do it *all* fairly easily. But you see, I *know* myself well enough that I *can’t* win an all-out war.”

A troubled expression on his face, the Demon King shrugged before picking up the conversation again.

“If the situation *does* devolve to that state, even assuming I *could*

slaughter *some* number of my enemies using *any* means at my disposal, I'd *still* end up in an *extremely* sticky quagmire because I'd *inevitably* be overthrown by force *anyway*. They have *strength* in numbers, and *each* individual is strong in their *own* right. I couldn't *possibly* compete and hope to *win*, now *could* I?"

Hmm. So he's saying those dickheads have quantity and quality? Yeah, that's deeeefinitely gonna be a problem.

"And in *that* event, the *only* ones who ultimately stand to win are the *humans*—enemies to *all* of us 'demonkind.' I mean, once we *exhaust* ourselves fighting each *other*, do you *really* think we'd stand a *chance* against them, *battered* and *divided* as we would be?"

"You...have a point."

Even if the Demon King's faction won the messy war against the Fiends and their supporters, the demon world would be left in shambles as a result. With demons of all stripes fatigued, humans would capitalize on that and crush demonkind entirely while they couldn't fight back. The eventual outcome would be the demon world's complete destruction. Looking at the big picture, then, the minute this uneasy *détente* escalated into total war, everybody here would lose.

"Since the *Fiends* and their *supporters* are all devotees of *power*, everything I say falls on *deaf* ears because I'm *weak*. Their *thought* process when it comes to *humans* is also just so *appallingly* rudimentary. Can you *believe* that they think all they need to do is *turn* the tables if humans ever *attack*? Although, I'll *grant* that a select *few* of them, *brighter* than their compatriots, have *decided* to throw their lot in with *me*. Unfortunately for *all* of us, though, demonkind as a *whole* tends to be dumber than *rocks*, so intelligent folks are *quite* few and far between."



His spiel done, the Demon King let out a long exhale. I totally knew what he meant about demons being absolute meatheads.

"Which is *why* I'm being *proactive* with measures like these *before* the situation turns *truly* horrendous."

Yeah, I kinda already figured that out, my guy.

"All right, then, Demon King. Let's say I join forces with you. What would you have me do?"

"Oh? Does *that* mean you're on *board*?"

"No. I'm just suggesting a hypothetical."

"Ha ha. I *appreciate* your honesty."

He smiled at me, then gave his answer.

"Hmm, well, *how* do I put this? I'd have you...become our *symbol*."

"...Elaborate."

"Of *course*, of course. More *specifically*, you would be a symbol of *power* for our side. Essentially, you would be a *means* for me to show that *we* have someone strong *too*. This is something I *can't* ask of our allies in *other* races, you see. I *need* our standard-bearer to be a *demon*, and a *powerful* one at that. No one *else* would work as *well* against them."

And there's the final piece of the puzzle.

"You basically want me to be your decoy, don't you?"

"In a *nutshell*, yes."

Holy shit. Mans didn't even hesitate. I kinda wanted to deck him for having absolutely zero shame, but he had some massive balls and I had to respect him for that.

"If I can make them *cautious* with a powerful *asset*, they will most *definitely* falter. The *more* they do so, the better *I* can react with *strategies* of my own. With their *attention* focused on you, it'll be *much* easier for me to predict their movements, which *affords* me the chance to limit *theirs* even more."

Fair. Very fair. Assuming I went along with his plan, I could see it playing out the way he said. When I suddenly appeared on the scene, the enemy would send their people to monitor me, investigate me, what have you. And if anyone could turn their actions against them, it would be this guy in front of me. For sure. *Sneaky clown.*

"Your *cooperation*, should you agree, *would* mean putting yourself on display at *any* and *all* times. I'd need you to be *flashy* about *whatever* tasks I request that you perform. Though *honestly*, I *haven't* thought that far ahead."

"Okay, I gotcha. Whaddya say we solidify the details right here and now, then?"

I deliberately put a cruel sneer on my face before continuing.

"I'ma be straight with you: I don't actually give a *fuck* which side

wins. Whether the demon world burns to the ground or y'all kill each other, have freaking at it. Makes no difference to me either way. But since you're asking me to put myself in danger, that's gotta mean you're ready to compensate me accordingly, yeah?"

"How dare you—"

"*Haloria*. Kindly *refrain* from speaking for now, *won't* you?"

"I... I beg your pardon, Your Majesty."

Overwhelmed by the still-beaming Lord of the Demon World's authority, Little Miss Hood shut her trap and silently slipped back to his side. This pretty boy was shady AF, but he clearly had the stateliness of a king. *Hats off to you, broski.*

"As a matter of *fact*, I *am*, Yuki. I consider my *allies* to be *business* partners, as alliances are *born* of *mutually* beneficial needs."

"Sounds like we're on the same page, meaning this'll go quick. What can *you* offer *me* that'll get me not just to help, but to do my darndest for my good pal the Demon King?"

"Heh heh heh. Listen *well*, Yuki. First, I can give you *information*. The Fiends and their allies are *your* enemies too. You can be *sure* that I'll send you *anything* I have as *soon* as I have it."

"Thanks, Captain Obvious. Like that's not a given."

After all, what use was an alliance whose members didn't share information? Not to mention that this guy telling me what he knew was the bare minimum for getting me to even come here.

"Right. Then, *next*, you're a demon lord who's the *master* of a labyrinth, yes? In *that* case, I'll ready *provisions* that will *enhance* your labyrinth's growth. *You* can decide *what* those provisions will be. Should you choose demon *lives* as the nourishment for your labyrinth... Well, it poses a bit of a *challenge*, but *worry* not. I can *definitely* follow through."

"Wow, that's disturbing. Consider me all good on that front. No people."

I mean, yeah, dungeons *did* develop by using living things as sustenance, but when he put it like *that*, it made me sound like some super-evil boss or something. Definitely not what I wanted to hear about myself. *Hold on a second, though. Did I hear him right? Did he say he could make it happen regardless?* Wow. Holy freakin' wow. That was scary in its own right, dang.

"Hmm, what to do, what to do... How 'bout money?"

"*Excellent!* What an *easy* order for me to fulfill."

"I don't mean *actual* money, though. Give me expensive-ass stuff that can be converted *into* money."

"Oh? *Hmm*. Consider it *done*, then. I'll reward you with an *appropriate* quantity of treasure. We can determine the exact *quantity* after we work out the *details* of our arrangement."

Nodding decisively to himself, Fynar looked like he was deep in thought.

“How do I say this *delicately*...? My people tell me you have a *wife* and *children*. I *also* learned that you spoke to your *maid* and *child* about wanting to *visit* the demon world again with your *whole* family. Something about taking them to *unusual* places for *sightseeing* and all?”

“Yeah, and?”

“If you decide to *cooperate* with me, I can make your *travels* to other races’ territories *hassle-free* by speaking to my demi-human and therianthrope *allies* on your behalf ahead of time. You’d *even* be allowed entry into special, *holy* places that normal people could *never* access.”

“Wh-Whoa! For real?!”

Fynar smiled at my amazed reaction before continuing.

“In *addition*, I’ll be your *personal* tour guide through the demon world. You *may* not believe it, but I was actually *nominated* for this position *wholeheartedly* by my predecessor. In other words, I *do* have a certain degree of *authority*, and, save for a *few* places, I can take you *just* about anywhere.”

Hmm. Hmmmmmm. He was literally offering me a deal I didn’t want to refuse. I could take the fam on vacation *and* Lefi on a honeymoon. *Dang, son. Talk about a sweet deal.*

“What *else*, now...? Ah, how about *girls* or *women*? Pick your *flavor*.”

“Neither. Don’t need ’em.”

Fynar apparently found my immediate reply unexpected because he tilted his head questioningly.

“Is that *right*? I was *told* that you were *quite* the deviant.”

“No. And don’t make me say it again. Whatever you heard, I ain’t about that life.”

He’d most likely been given a rundown of what’d happened in the stagecoach on the journey here. Which, like, okay, I hadn’t been able to stop leering, but come on. *Any* man would’ve done the same if they were in my position. Hell, every man in that damn carriage *had* done the same! Besides, if I actually accepted that last offer, I’d be reborn in my next life as a corpse. That was how dead Lefi would’ve killed me. Even if I tried to hide any *romantic activities* with other women, her dragon nose would’ve sniffed me out in a heartbeat.

Never mind the fact that I had no intention of being swayed even a millimeter by another woman. *One-woman man five-ever*. It didn’t matter how beautiful a woman was or how rockin’ of a bod she had, nobody held a candle to my wife. Compared to all the women I knew in my old life, Lefi was a thousand times more desirable than them. I sincerely believed that from the bottom of my heart.

“Then I’ll *increase* the amount of treasure I give you as *compensation*. What *do* you think? Do we have a *deal*?”

I contemplated the Demon King’s terms in silence for a while. His proposal was pretty good, all things considered. I didn’t really have a reason to say no. If the Fiends and their allies were gonna end up being my enemies anyway, I’d have to crush them eventually one way or the other. Taking the king’s deal now would be smart because it’d net me a boatload of moolah.

His plan to continue moving behind the scenes as support would make my role a lot easier too. I couldn’t deny that I had my reservations about whether or not he’d hold up his end of the bargain, what with him being a Blackheart and all, but going down that route of “what if” was pointless since I could think of all kinds of possibilities, logical or otherwise. *I’ll deal with that if or when it happens.*

On the off chance he *did* betray me, I’d just add him to my list of enemies and rob his ass blind. Easy peasy. To be fair, though, I wanted to avoid making an enemy out of a tactical son of a gun like him. He was clearly too damn good at scheming and I did *not* wanna be on the receiving end of his slick mind.

What concerned me the most right now was the fact that I didn’t have a clear picture of the enemy’s form and strength. I was reasonably confident that my current level meant it’d be easy enough for me to pulverize most opponents, but the major problem was that I had zero info on the people I’d be fighting. On that front, I’d wring out every bit of data I could from this guy and ask Leila for advice before acting.

Hmm, might be time to break the mask back out. Yuuup, the same one I’d worn during the Arsil incident. I would start using a fake name too. Maybe Wye again. Actually, nah. Better off thinking up a different one. A new name would be better for confusing the enemy. Of course, if one of them had Analysis at a high enough level, me fudging my data wouldn’t work on them, but it was still better than doing nothing.

Mwa ha ha, a mysterious masked man lurking in the shadows of the demon world. Once I made my presence known, it wouldn’t take long for rumors about me to spread far and wide. They would whisper in shock and awe about me, confounded by my very existence.

“Oh, I’ve been meaning to ask. You guys weren’t the ones who pulled that shady crap in Arsil, the humans’ capital, right?”

“It *wasn’t* my doing. If it *had* been, you *definitely* wouldn’t have found out.”

Fynar said that incredibly matter-of-factly, grinning cheerfully as he did. I shrugged my shoulders in defeat, laughing wryly at his

confidence.

“Message received. All right, I’ll team up with you. Let me talk to my maid first, though. I wanna discuss the conditions and compensation with her before we finalize this.”

“*Fantastic! Wonderful!* I’m so glad to hear that. Ah, my shoulders feel so much *lighter* now.”

Fynar beamed in delight at my announcement.

“I bet you had a backup plan in case I rejected your offer, didn’t you?”

“Well, I *don’t*, but trust that I *would* have thought of *something*. Even if it meant putting *more* on my plate to get you to say *yes*.”

Right, right, because for this wily dude, asking for my help was just one of the many plans whirling in his brain. I could see the logic in hindsight. If all he’d needed was just a single strategy for a resolution, all would have been right with the demon world ages ago.

“We’ve *agreed* to cooperate with each other and settle the *details* later. With the most *important* bits taken care of now, Yuki, would you *care* to join me on a small *trip*?”

“Huh? Where we goin’?”

“*You’ll* see. Come.”

Fynar stood up from the throne and flitted his hand, signaling me to follow him. Curious, I did just that.



“I’ll *introduce* them, starting from the *right*. The man with the long *beard* is one of the *mountain* folk—King of the Dwarves, *Dodah*. The *lovely*, long-eared lady belongs to the *forest* people. She is *Naforazey Faraye*, the Queen of the Elves. And the man with the *fangs* and large frame is the *peacemaker* amongst the therianthropes. Of the *leonid* race, I present to you Beast Lord *Vardroi Gallad*. Everyone, *this* is Demon Lord *Yuki*, master of a *labyrinth*. I *hope* we can *all* get along.”

Well, shoot. Now I knew what Fynar had meant when he’d said “perfect timing.” The Demon King had led me to an enormous space that looked like a conference room. Inside, three people were seated around a circular table in the center of the room.

Name: Dodah

Race: Dwarf

Class: Earth King

Level: 85

Name: Naforazey Faraye

Race: High Elf

Class: Fairy Queen

Level: 93

Name: Vardroi Gallad

Race: Leonid

Class: Beast Lord

Level: 101

So these are his allies from other races, huh? Each of them was accompanied by escorts of their own race. Their guards all stood on alert by the wall, and for some reason, they all emanated a crackling, tense vibe. It was the total opposite of the relaxed attitudes of the seated trio. My guess was that their subordinates were super on edge since it was their job to protect their respective people's leader.

"A demon lord? Demon King, are ya havin' me on? Tell me ya aren't actually initiatin' a greedy, arrogant demon lord into our camp, boy."

The first one to flare up and assert himself after Fynar's introductions was Vardroi, the extremely brawny man with the lion face. He gave me a hard, intimidating stare that screamed that he didn't think I was up to snuff.

"Hmph. I'm o' the same mind. Ye took yer sweet time makin' us wait, and fer what? A demon lord? If yer tryin' ta wind me up, yer doin' a damn good job o' it!"

Dwarf King Dodah, with his shaggy beard, shouted angrily, agreeing with the Beast Lord. His appearance and personality were more or less exactly what I'd imagined of a dwarf. I could definitely tell he had the spirit of a true craftsman and the cranky, fussy temper to match. That aside, cheesus crust, if I hadn't already known that demon lords were public enemy number one, I did now.

"Yuki's *disposition* is quite different from *most* demon lords, so I *suggest* you not concern yourselves on that front. Just like *you* all have, I believe *he'll* prove himself a *dependable* ally, which is why I *invited* him in the first place."

"Grr... Be that as it may, laddie—"

"Even if you *don't* trust him, isn't it *enough* that he's an *enemy* of the Fiends and their supporters?"

Before the Dwarf King could complain some more, the Lord of the Demon World smoothly cut him off with one hell of a persuasive argument.

"You talk too much, mountain man. Enough of your clamor. If Lord Fynar says he's a man worthy of our trust, then I choose to take him at his word. Besides, it's clear that you two can't see his power values. If you could, you wouldn't be blathering on like so."

The Elf Queen, Naforazey, finally got involved in the

conversation. A cold sweat coated her face as she watched me cautiously. She was an outrageously beautiful person, with platinum blonde hair and pointed ears typical of elves in various media, but her sublime appearance hid her strong personality, which shone through in her piercing eyes. *Definitely has the presence of a queen.*

I wondered if she'd let me touch her ears if I asked nicely. Probably not. The elves would most likely consider it a dishonor to their leader and I'd end up making enemies of the whole race. A damn shame.

"Ah, that's *right*. Darling Naforazey, you have *Analysis*, don't you? So you most *certainly* have a good idea of his *strength*."

"The impudence to address Lady Naforazey so disrespectfully!"

"Calm yourself. I don't mind. Honestly, though, Fynar, you should be grateful you still claim your life as your own. You are the only person who dares call me that."

Naforazey imperiously held her hand up near her head, stopping her furious subordinate from acting. Then, looking exasperated, she turned to face Fynar. In that brief span of time, I used Analysis on the Elf Queen and discovered that yup, she did indeed have it. Level 9 too, which was pretty dang high. Mine was a little higher, sure, but she could still probably see most of my stats.

"Someone strong enough to make an elf sweat? Well, now, if that don't make my blood boil in anticipation."

"*Vardroi*, Yuki arrived in Leigeghegg *today*, so if you're looking for a *fight*, I suggest you challenge him *another* time. Ah, Yuki, you can sit over *there*."

Fynar brushed off the battle-junkie Beast Lord super casually and urged me toward an open seat at the round table. I plunked myself down on it.

"Thanks. Nice to meet you all. I'm Demon Lord Yuki."

I waggled my fingers in a little wave at the three rulers as they stared suspiciously at me. The first one to speak directly to me was the Elf Queen.

"Perhaps...you'd be willing to answer a question for me?"

"Sure. Fire away."

"As you are a demon lord, do you think it wise to leave your labyrinth unattended like this?"

Okay, yeah, that was a fair point from an outsider's perspective. Anyone would definitely question my capabilities if they found out I'd left the dungeon I was supposed to look after behind. By traipsing off to other locales merrily as I pleased, it was the equivalent of leaving my other heart exposed and vulnerable.

"I left my wife in charge, so it's the safest place in the world. I don't have a thing to worry about."

“A demon lord with a wife...? Did you abduct some poor, hapless girl and force her into your service?”

“Like hell I did. I am *not* about that. You have Analysis, dontcha? Use it and see for yourself.”

The fugg kinda person does she think I am? She’d dissed me so matter-of-factly too. Rude. But the Elf Queen did as I instructed, and after activating the ability again, she narrowed her eyes at me.

“‘The Supreme Dragon’s Consort’... Then it’s consensual. Wait, The Supreme Dragon’s Consort?!”

Because of our level disparity, most of my data probably appeared garbled to her as she muttered quietly to herself. A beat later, though, she just about shrieked in surprise. I could tell by her expression that she was thoroughly shook.

“L-Lass, did ye say ‘Supreme Dragon’?!”

“The one from the legends?!”

“That’s the one. Guess you’ve all heard of her, eh?”

The Dwarf King and Beast Lord’s jaws dropped when they heard the Elf Queen’s almost-shout. Had the same flabbergasted looks as her and everything. I sneaked a glance at the Demon King to gauge his reaction, and all I saw was his usual shady grin. He didn’t look even a little surprised, which I bet was because Haloria had already told him at some point, so in his case, forewarned had definitely been forearmed. Since getting to the castle, they hadn’t said much to each other while I was around, which made me suspect that she’d used a magical device or something on the journey to the demon world to relay the information to him ahead of time.

“Well, I hope that *satisfies* your curiosity about him and *enhances* your *understanding* of both his *strength* and the *environment* he lives in. I *personally* think it’s in our *best* interests to stay on his *good* side, but I’d *love* to hear *your* opinions as well.”

Fynar, still beaming, spoke to the trio. It didn’t take a genius to figure out the real reason he’d invited me here. Of course, part of it was getting everyone acquainted with each other before shit hit the fan, but dollars to DP, my Points were on the main reason having to do with my compensation.

“Hm, well... Lord Yuki, on behalf of the elves, I’d like to extend an offer of fellowship—one that places us on equal footing. What do you think?”

“Huh? Oh, sure, thanks. Looking forward to being friends, then.”

I didn’t think too hard about it before replying to the Elf Queen. Triumph shone on her face for just a second before she got control of her innermost thoughts and stopped them from slipping through again. She smoothed out her features and pasted a bright smile on her face, then went back to talking.

“Most excellent. I’m glad to hear that. Right, then, you may present it to him.”

“Yes, Your Majesty. Lord Yuki, please accept this.”

One of the elven bodyguards in the background walked over and offered me a wooden ornament. It was about the size of my palm and very closely resembled a dream catcher, which was a protective charm back on Earth. I noticed some sort of pattern woven into the circular central part.

“Umm... What exactly is this, Miss Queen?”

“For us elves, it signifies proof of our trust in the holder. If you show it to a member of our race, they will accommodate you in any way they can.”

“Whoa. You sure you wanna give something that important to me so freely?”

“Of course. Consider it an emblem of our new fellowship. I expect that you’ll treat it with great care.”

The Elf Queen rounded off her remark with a grin. *Crap. Did I just play myself?* Her expression made me second-guess whether I should have been as quick as I was to accept her offer; the unspoken implication was that I would have to reciprocate accordingly if an elf ever needed my help. That answered the question of what she’d meant by “a fellowship on equal footing.”

Oh well. This was hardly the end of the world. I wasn’t a fan of the sneaky way she’d given me the charm, but I didn’t think having it would cause me any problems either. The Elf Queen might’ve been thinking she could use it to exploit me in some way, but little did she know that I planned on doing the same to her by making full use of the thing. For example, touching elf ears. I was the type of guy who never gave up on what he wanted, and she hadn’t said squat about there being any restrictions, so as far as I was concerned, the elf world was now my oyster.

“Grr! Ye woodland she-devil! Dinna think ye can steal a march on the rest o’ us!”

“Kindly mind your own business, mountain man. This is a personal pledge between myself and the demon lord. Your needs do not concern me, so I’ll act as I please.”

The Elf Queen mocked the Dwarf King with both her tone and her expression. She was clearly trying to get him riled up. *Guess these two don’t get along.*

“Kh! Grr... Demon lord! We dwarf folk demand a bond o’ fellowship with ye as well! Unlike that there harpy, we o’ the mountains uphold our friendships through ’onesty! What say ye?!”

“Oh, uh, good to know. Sounds like a plan to me.”

The Dwarf King shot up from his seat and slammed both hands

down on the table to emphasize the passion in his tirade. A bit overwhelmed by his enthusiasm, I nodded meekly in agreement. Then, figuring it was my turn to return the favor, I spoke up.

"Right, so, I like to give as good as I get. As thanks for the elven charm and the dwarven offer of friendship, here's something for you guys."

I opened up Inventory and rooted around until I found what I wanted: Super Potions. I pulled out two bottles and handed one to each of them.

"Eh? What's this?"

"Hmm... Oh! I-Is this an elixir?!"

"Ye must be mad! An elixir?!"

The Elf Queen must've confirmed her suspicion using Analysis. Judging by the look on her face, this boggled her mind nearly just as much as when she'd seen my stats earlier. Also, I couldn't tell if her comment had the Dwarf King shouting in anger or surprise.

My Demon-Lordy-Sense was telling me that the Elf Queen was calculating and shrewd, so I'd been afraid of what might happen later if I just took instead of giving as well. Based on her reaction, though, it'd been a smart move on my part to offer something in return as a sign of goodwill. And while I hadn't gotten anything from the Dwarf King, he would've blown his top if I'd treated him different from the Elf Queen. I figured it'd be best to smooth any beards before they got ruffled. Super Potions cost an ungodly amount of DP, but considering that I had dozens of them in Inventory, I could afford to part with a few here and there. If all I needed to both earn and return favors were a few bottles of the stuff, all the better.

"Good grief, Lord Yuki, enough with the surprises already. In any case, I gladly accept your gift of this elixir. However, I see that the mountain man is happy enough to receive without giving. What happened to your grand pronouncement of honest friendship?"

"Grr... Mind your tongue, woman! S-Soon! I'll most definitely thank ye properly fer this soon!"

Ugh, I wish these two would stop using me as an excuse to argue with each other.

"Heh heh heh... I see now why ya brought this formidable man into the fold, Demon King."

"I'm *glad* to hear that. But Vardroi, will you not be *performing* an exchange of your *own* with Yuki?"

"No. When ya knock the stuffin' outta someone 'n accept each other's strength, *that's* when ya become friends. Friendship ain't somethin' that can be bought 'n sold so easy."

Hearing the Beast Lord's words, his escorts, who were standing behind him with their arms folded aggressively, nodded

enthusiastically in agreement. That told me all I needed to know about the leonids and their stance on the “might is right” philosophy.

“How ’bout it, then, demon lord? One fight. You and me.”

“Uhhh...sure, if the opportunity ever pops up.”

If I’d given him a straight “yes” or “no,” I knew this Beast Lord would’ve just made things stupidly complicated. Figured giving him a vague response instead was a good way to weasel out of that.

With intros out of the way, the Demon King turned toward the four of us and spoke.

“Now that we’re all *acquainted*, let’s begin the *meeting*.”



“So that’s how the discussion went. I ended up agreeing to team up with them.”

Leila and En, who’d been waiting for me in the room provided for us, listened as I relayed everything that’d happened so far.

“Well, we certainly have a lot to consider, hm? The fact that the Demon King introduced you to the other leaders means he attaches a great deal of importance to your existence, Master Demon Lord. I think it’s safe to say he holds great faith in you as an ally.”

Bearing in mind that the existence of the Fiends was the reason for all this, my conference with the Demon King and the others had been broadly divided into two topics. The first revolved around the other races entering into a military alliance. If one of them was attacked, the others would dispatch reinforcements as aid. Essentially, they would all work together to support each other.

I thought it would’ve taken a lot longer to hammer out the details for that part of the meeting, what with all the logistics and intricacies involved in coordinating so many groups of people, but much to my surprise, they took care of it in a jiffy. It was possible that they’d already had some level of discussion about it before I joined the faction, so maybe that was why it hadn’t taken long.

I mean, considering I didn’t have an army of my own, they’d had no choice but to exclude me. And even if I did have one, the idea of a permanent military alliance didn’t particularly thrill me. Too much potential for all kinds of problems. Regardless, since I lacked an extensive amount of troops and thus couldn’t commit to a real military alliance, the others decided I was better off maintaining friendly relations with them on an individual basis. It was pretty much a result of what the Elf Queen had said about a “fellowship on equal footing.” Her words had apparently had a strong enough impact on the rest of them to win them over. If she’d intended for everything to play out like this, she was a whole lot more calculating than I’d initially guessed.

The second topic we discussed had to do with an official summit. Everything up until our earlier conversation, including said meeting, had apparently been unofficial in nature. To make up for that, the Demon King planned on issuing a public proclamation about a formal assembly named “The Four Races Alliance Summit,” where our same group would convene again. He wanted the summit to be the talk of the demon world and reach the ears of our enemies. It was meant to function as a show of force to them. In the event they tried to attack, the implication would be that they’d be making enemies of everyone who was part of the alliance.

The agenda would revolve around what we’d already discussed: entering into a formal military alliance and the nitty-gritty that came with it. In short, the summit was a complete and total farce to flaunt the alliance’s might. Given our situation, though, it was a necessity. *The show must go on.*

“A symbol of power, hm? In which case, you’ll be putting yourself in grave danger, Master Demon Lord...”

“Yeah, I know, but I’m not really worried about that.”

I had willingly decided to take on the role he wanted me to play before he’d even introduced me to the others because he’d made one heck of a compelling argument. After all, for better or for worse, demons were believers in power. If I went ham sandwich with mine, really showed to everyone how strong I actually was, then we could get the fence-sitters on our side instead of the enemy’s.

I still found it difficult to understand their value system based on power, but there was no doubt that demons’ obedience to it went a lot deeper than I’d ever thought. So as the “symbol of power” for the Demon King’s faction, all I had to do was go nuts to the best of my ability, which was pretty much what I always did anyway. Naturally, danger went hand in hand with that, but it was a liiittle too late to be complaining. Besides, I now had serious backing from my new allies, so as long as we were on friendly terms, I’d rely on them whenever possible to turn the tide in our favor.

“Don’t worry, Master... I’ll protect you.”

“Ha ha, thanks, En. I know you will.”

I ruffled her hair as she clenched her fist aggressively. Well, as aggressively as she could be with her usual expressionless face. But I could see the determination in her eyes, and that was more than enough for me.

“The only thing I’m worried about is putting you two in danger because of me. I’m gonna toe the line as much as possible so neither of you ends up as collateral damage, and I’ll protect you no matter what, of course, but if something *does* go wrong, I want you to hold on to these.”

I gave each of them a silver chain necklace.

“And what might these be?”

“They’re dungeon-return devices. The design is really simple, so give me a pass for them not being prettier like real jewelry.”

“Oh! Magical tools that allow the user to traverse space?”

“Yeah. They only work one time, though.”

Leila inhaled sharply in surprise and I nodded in response to her question.

These bad boys had shown up in the DP Catalog after the dungeon had leveled up from me killing that damned Gyuohga. When the holder used their magic to activate one, it would instantly teleport them to where the dungeon’s core was—that being the real throne room. The only downside was that a single use was all you’d get out of them.

I’d bought some of them before I’d left the dungeon. Needed to be ready in case things went to pot either here or in the dungeon. Sure, the necklace by itself wasn’t enough to tell me if something dangerous was happening back home, but I hadn’t left anything to chance on that front either. Supposing enemies *did* attack the dungeon, my very own headquarters, I’d set something up so that I could at least detect any encroachment. Also, Rir and my other pets—and Lefi—were there as a super last resort. Put it all together and that was deadass the safest place in the world, so chances were high that my setup would go to waste. *Just in case, though. Can never be too careful.*

“Master...how do I wear it?”

“Here, I’ll put it on for you. Turn around. Go like this, and...done! Well, look at you, you little beauty.”

“Hmm.”

My compliment had her cheeks turning pink and a teensy bit of joy blooming on her face. *What a cutie.* En couldn’t use the magical device in her sword form, but she could in her human form. As long as she was holding her sword and had the necklace, she’d be able to activate its return ability just fine, so there was no harm in making sure she had it.

But she *had* to hold on to her sword body, otherwise she wouldn’t be able to go back. Why? Because if she got too far away from it while human, the Anthropomorphization ability would automatically stop working. She’d return to her sword form and be right back where she’d teleported away from with no way to try it again.

You might be wondering what happened to stuff like jewelry whenever she switched between her human and sword forms. Well, when she was a sword, it disappeared, but it reappeared like nothing had ever happened after she transformed into a human again. Real weird.

“Want me to put yours on too, Leila?”

“Tee hee. Yes please.”

She turned around and I clasped the necklace around her thin, pale neck.

“Nice. Looks good on you.”

“Thank you very much. I’ll make sure to keep this a secret from Lady Lefi, yes?”

“H-Hey, cool it with that kinda talk! I-I wasn’t h-hitting on you just now, Miss Leila. Just keep that in mind, would ya?”

“Hee hee, I’m only joking. You’re much too panicked.”

Her mischievous smile told me that she was enjoying herself tremendously. At my expense. I was glad she was happy, but I needed her to stop with jokes like that. *Almost gave me a damn heart attack, woman.*

“Ahem. Anyway, there we have it. I’m seeing the Demon King again tomorrow to finish up our discussion. Think you can help me nail down the conditions for compensation and what exactly the alliance will entail?”

“Yes, definitely. As far as compensation goes, I think you have leeway to pressure him for a bit more, Master Demon Lord, so I recommend we take that route.”

“Wait, really? I thought I asked for plenty already.”

“Let’s just say that negotiations might not be your forte, hm? Which is why I’ll certainly draw out every advantage I can for you on that front.”

“O-Oh, okay, works for me. Thanks, then.”

I bobbed my head in acknowledgment at the determined glint in Leila’s eyes. She was clearly excited to show off her bargaining skills. *Jeez, do I suck that bad at haggling?*

The next day, I took Leila along to my audience with the Demon King. We agreed on the following:

- The Demon King will provide the maximum level of support and protection to Demon Lord Yuki.
- The Demon King will treat Demon Lord Yuki as a mercenary.
- The Demon King will pay the stipulated compensation to Demon Lord Yuki whether or not the ongoing issues are resolved.

The first and third conditions basically adhered to what we’d discussed before. But since the second effectively changed my role, at least on paper, I had to make a big deal out of being a hired gun. That way, any hate directed my way could easily be deflected to the Demon King’s faction, allowing me pretty much free rein to do whatever I wanted while still putting my strength on display. And as for compensation, I had the Demon King double the amount of treasure

we'd initially discussed. Now, our alliance was officially official.

Though the Demon King had compromised on a lot more than I'd imagined, it made me wonder what would've happened if I'd let Leila handle negotiations right out of the gate. If she'd been at our first face-to-face meeting or the informal one with the others, I probably would've made out like a literal bandit. *But what's done is done.* At the end of the day, Leila's superior intellect and dependable personality had scored me a pretty good deal, so I couldn't complain. Not much, anyway.

I thought about Leila and the Demon King's war of words, both of them smiling in their unique, ferocious ways. Not gonna lie, I'd been scared *and* impressed watching them battle it out both verbally and mentally. Little Miss Hood had been trembling in awe too. She'd been assigned as our attendant for the duration of our stay, meaning she was pretty much always with us. So far, she'd been in charge of tasks like meals and delivering the Demon King's messages to me.

"Lord Yuki, I don't think it would hurt for you to rely on those around you more, would it? You always try to solve problems on your own because you care for us and the others. We're all well aware and grateful, but even so..."

"I agree... You work too hard, Master."

Because we were in public, Leila scolded me by name instead of using my title like she usually did. En jumped on the "let's ream Yuki out" bandwagon with her.

"Okay, okay, I get it. I will, sorry. Sheesh."

I laughed wryly at their advice. Then, in an attempt to escape their nagging, I picked up the wooden cup on the table and downed what was in it.

Oh, did I forget to mention where we were right now? Inside one of the taverns in the demon world's mazelike capital of Leigeghegg. Once our negotiations had concluded, the Demon King had cheerfully waved us off with a, "There's still *time* before I ask you to *perform*, so *until* then, go ahead and *enjoy* the town!"

Doing as he instructed, we ventured outside the castle walls and into the city. Night had already fallen by the time we'd finished because even though we'd met up in the afternoon, his and Leila's sparring match had taken that freaking long. We'd managed to check out a bit of the city before hunger'd had us wandering into this restaurant. But you bet your ass I planned on doing some more exploring another day.

This particular pub had seating on two floors, with the second floor being where we'd chosen to park our rears. That said, it was really more like a balcony with an atrium in the center. Ivy-like plants trailed from the landing up here down to the first floor. They

produced pale balls of light, which gave the place some extra lighting on top of what was coming from the ceiling lights. The whole interior was decorated so beautifully and stylishly that it looked like it was straight out of a fantasy setting.

A small band was performing on a stage set in an alcove off the main seating area on the ground floor. They might've been traveling musicians for all I knew, but they played some wonderful, lively tunes. The music gave it more of a restaurant vibe than a tavern one, but if you ignored the band and focused on the noise and chatter, it was definitely a tavern.

"You're right, though. Honestly. Can I just let you handle stuff like that from now on? You know, negotiations and whatnot? I feel like it'd work out really well if you were in charge of that instead of me."

"Of course! Leave it to me. I'll do my utmost to exceed your expectations, my lord."

"Great, I appreciate it."

While the three of us enjoyed our meal, a pair of people sitting further away caught my eye. They were both wearing long cloaks, with their hoods pulled up over their heads. Hood 1 and Hood 2 were most definitely not Haloria and her buddies because the color of their cloaks was different. They were just random strangers as far as I could tell.

There wasn't anything particularly odd about their appearance either. We'd passed by a ton of people outside wearing hooded greatcoats and mantles, so it wasn't like they were especially suspicious, I just found it kinda interesting that they'd chosen to sit off in a corner with their hoods pulled up. Who did that in a cheerful place like this? On a whim, I activated Analysis.

"...Nell?"

One of the hooded figures turned in the direction of my voice.

"Huh?! Mr. Yuki?!"

Peeking out from under the fabric was a familiar face—Nell, the Church's hero.





Name: Nell
Race: Mid Devil (Human)
Class: Advanced Swordsman (Hero)
Level: 59
HP: 2,996 / 2,996
MP: 7,670 / 7,670
Strength: 684
Stamina: 757
Agility: 902
Magic: 898
Dexterity: 1,101
Luck: 1,299
Special Abilities: Barrier Magic, Swiftiness
Abilities: Holy Magic 6, Swordsmanship 5, Scout 4,
Danger Detection 5, Dagger Combat 3, Fire Magic 2
Title: Holy Sword Master, The Impressionable Girl,
The Guardian

Looks like she's using a magical tool to manipulate her stats. But hers was a whole lot less effective than the Demon King's because it didn't work at all on my Analysis ability. I could see her real race and class in parentheses, and all her other data was showing like normal.

What a massive kick in the nuts it was seeing how much stronger she'd gotten since the last time we'd seen each other. A few had crossed the 1,000 mark, while others were damn close to it. Then, there was her Luck value. Her *goddamn* Luck value. Mine had barely even quivered, whereas hers had shot through the friggin' stratosphere. *Why?! Whyyy?! That should be meee!*

With numbers like hers, she'd give anyone here in the demon world a run for their money, and that was taking into account the fact that demons as a whole were stronger than humans. Hell, she was even stronger than that Adamantite-class adventurer I'd fought. Only a month and a half had passed since we'd gone our separate ways, but all this progress in such a short time... Maybe heroes grew way faster than the average person? Definitely an impressive class right there. Now it made me curious about how much more powerful she could become.

"Wh-Why are you here, Mr. Yuki?"

I took everybody over to a large, open table nearby so we could talk more easily. Nell, still looking shocked, questioned me.

"That's my line, dude. What the heck are you doing here? You

trying to pick up a *special* friend or something? If you are, you picked the right place by coming to a bar. Heh heh. Wink wink, nudge nudge.”

“Huh? No? That’s not what I’m here for at all?”

The hero answered me with a confused expression. Ya know what? Never mind. Forget I said anything. *Sorry for being lame and a loser.*

“You know him?”

The cloaked person sitting next to the hero spoke up in a curious voice that sounded like it belonged to a young girl. She held a shoulder-high metal staff, and for some reason, her voice sounded drowsy. I thought it might’ve been Carlotta the holy knight, but guess not.

“Oh, um, well...”

“You can say that we met by chance. That’s all there is to it. Nothing special.”

I spoke for Nell since she was fumbling for a way to explain how she knew someone in the demon world, which just so happened to be the home base for humanity’s collective enemy. I just wanted to help her out, but my words apparently struck a sour note for some reason because she didn’t look all that happy with me. *Wait, what’d I do? Did I accidentally say something I shouldn’t have?*

“Huh.”

The hero’s companion said that one word, clearly having lost interest already. She turned her gaze toward her cup, picked it up, and sipped whatever was inside. *Welp, looks like we have another unique character on our hands.*

“Right, um, this is my friend Ronia. Ronia, this is Yuki. He’s also my friend.”

“Nice to meetcha.”

“Hmm.”

Just that brief response in her drowsy voice. She was the silent type like En, huh?

Name: Ronia Lusidol

Race: Mid Devil (Human)

Class: Advanced Conjurer (Royal Conjurer)

Level: 42

Ooh. A Royal Conjurer, eh? Overall, she had pretty average stats for a human, but her Magic and Dexterity values were insanely high. Like, “blew the rest of them out of the water” high. Made me think she’d be an absolute *beast* in a magic fight.

Nell still had her beat on those two stats too, though, which really

emphasized the fact that the hero class as a whole was totally nutty for humans. I mean, c'mon, this one had more magic than a *specialized, professional conjurer*. I was even more glad now that I'd met Nell in the relatively early stages of her growth. If she'd been at the level she was now, I might've gotten unalived on the spot. But thinking about what a crybaby scaredy-cat she'd been, maaaybe I would've made it out okay.

By the way, they'd gone all-in on their disguises as demons. Both Nell and her friend had small horns growing out of their heads and some kind of marks or tattoos on their cheeks. I wouldn't have been surprised to find out they were hiding devilish tails under their cloaks too. All of these features must've been unique to the Mid Devil race they were masquerading as.

"Um, Mr. Yuki, please don't take offense. She's just not very good at talking to people."

"Wrong. People just don't understand what I say."

"R-Right, but, well... Ronia, the topics you discuss are very complicated, so I don't think there are many out there who *can* understand what you say."

The hero replied with a rueful smile. Seemed Nell was having a tough go of managing a strong personality like Ronia.

"Miss Leila, it's nice to see you again as well. Oh, who's this little girl?"

"She's, uh... She's my kid."

"Huh?! M-Mr. Yuki, you have a child?! W-With who?! Lefi?!"

Nell jumped out of her chair and shoved her face close to mine, interrogating me. Automatically pulling my torso as far back as I could without falling out of my own seat, I answered her.

"Y-Yeah, you could say that. Here."

"Hmm... I can't quite tell because it's wrapped in cloth, but judging from the size, I'm guessing it's your weapon? The one you had with you last time?"

Her implication being, "So what's your point?" In response, I held En's real body with one hand and patted her human head with the other.

"*This is her.*"

"I... What?"

"Well, technically speaking, En's the human form of this sword I made. I also melded Lefi's molted parts into her, so she *is* our daughter in a sense, y'know?"

"Mr. Yuki, I don't understand any of this. I mean, why would you... How can a weapon even take on a human form?"

"No clue. But I wanted to try it out and it worked."

"I...see? You wanted to try it out and it worked?"

Nell rubbed her temples like her head hurt. *Hey, I've got aspirin if you want some, girl. You just let me know.*

"Lady Nell, let me offer you some much-needed advice, hm? You'll only exhaust yourself if you expect Lord Yuki to conduct himself within the boundaries of common sense."

"You know what? You're right. You're absolutely right. There'll be no end to it if I obsess over every bizarre thing he says."

"Guys, what the heck? Don't talk about me like I'm some kinda oddball freak."

"I'm sorry to be so blunt, Mr. Yuki, but to me, you *are* an oddball freak."

"Unfortunately, Lord Yuki, I find I can't come to your defense in this instance."

You two have some serious 'nads to be treating me like this. But don't think I'm gonna let it slide. Just you wait. I can't believe you, though, Leila. I mean, you're my maid! You're supposed to be on my side!

".....No. Master is...a very good person."

Umm, Miss En? Not that I'm not flattered by your objection—in fact, I'm over the moon about it—but it took you hella long to speak up? And you don't sound particularly convincing either? En? Hey, En? Look at me, won't you? En? Why won't you look at me, En?

"Ah, right, I almost forgot. Here, Mr. Yuki."

"Huh? What is it?"

Nell rummaged around inside her cloak, pulled something out, and handed it to me. I took it from her, still a little depressed by En's reaction. A *letter*? It was addressed "To My Beloved Mr. Demon Lord."

"...What is it?"

My face blank, I repeated my question.

"It's from Her Highness Ilyr. She asked me to give it to you if I ever ran into you."

Her Highness Ilyr was...the princess I'd rescued in the royal capital, Arsil.

"Master...what is that?"

"Oh, uh, nothing. Just something for my eyes only. Top secret. Extremely personal."

Making sure that Leila and En couldn't peek, I opened the envelope and slipped the letter out so I could read it.

Dear Mr. Demon Lord,

How are you doing on a warm day like today? I think about you every day, Mr. Demon Lord. There isn't a day you're not on my mind! I wanted to tell you all about my overflowing feelings, so the other day, I tried to sneak out of the castle. Unfortunately, Father's guards found me right away. Father was very angry with me.

I won't give up, though! Someday, I'll definitely make sure I come see you, Mr. Demon Lord. But I'd be so very happy if you came to visit first. I can't wait to see you again.

*With all my love and dreams of being kidnapped by you soon,
Ilyr*

The little princess had clearly put a lot of hard work into this letter, but the handwriting was adorable, just like a young girl's would be. It left me literally speechless. *Huh. Is this what people call a "love letter"?* It was my first time getting one. If someone asked me whether or not I was happy about it, I'd say I was, but like...uh... Unable to process beyond that thought, I quietly folded the letter up and slipped it into Inventory before En and the others could hound me about it.

"Mr. Yuki, I'll be staying in this city for quite a while longer, so why don't you write her a reply and give it to me before I leave?"

"Wait, what? Do I have to?"

"You don't, but Her Highness would be quite devastated if you didn't. Oh, I can help you if you're worried about what to write."

"Please and thank you."

I needed all the help I could get because no chance I knew how to write a letter to a little girl. Definitely couldn't go to Leila and En on this one, though. Not a chance in hell if I wanted my head to stay on my body. Couldn't risk them snitching to Lefi about this.

"A-Anyway, Nell, tangents aside, let's get back to why you're actually here."

Determined to end that particular topic of discussion so I didn't arouse my two watchers' suspicions, I tried to steer the conversation in another direction.

"Hmm... I don't think the king or Carlotta would mind if I told you, Mr. Yuki. With that in mind, this is confidential, so you need to swear not to tell anyone first."

"Yeah, okay, I swear."

"Are you sure about this?"

Ronia cut in.

"I am. We can trust them. Think of them as reassuring allies."

"All right. If you say so."

Having said her piece, Ronia piped right back down. *She trusts Nell, huh?* That was probably why she backed off so quickly. Nell waited a beat to make sure her friend had no more comments, then discreetly glanced around us, checking for any eavesdroppers. Once she confirmed we were the only ones in the vicinity, she spoke again, softly.

"It's actually not a deeply serious matter, all things considered. You know them too, Mr. Yuki—the true culprits behind the incident at

the royal castle.”

I nodded. Her words were obvious to me but just vague enough to anyone who hadn't been there.

“We couldn't stand constantly being on the defensive, so the higher-ups decided to send a few of us out here to gather intel. It would have been dumb to send anyone with average abilities, so they chose me and several other strong candidates. The others are off doing their own things right now, though, which is why Ronia and I are the only ones in this pub.”

By “here,” she obviously meant the demon world.

“Daaang. That's a pretty bold plan, dontcha think?”

It wouldn't have been an exaggeration to say that Nell was her country's greatest asset combat-wise. In her current state, she was essentially the pinnacle of human strength. Saying that it was bold of the kingdom to send their keystone fighter not just outside its borders but straight into the enemy stronghold was putting it super lightly. Maybe “outrageous” was a better word? “Insane”? “Batshit”? Anything along those lines was a good way to describe what they were doing.

“Now it's my turn to ask you, Mr. Yuki. Why are *you* here?”

“Cause the Demon King summoned me.”

“The...Demon King?”

Nell looked fairly surprised. I nodded in reply before continuing.

“Yeah. You know how we more or less completely ruined the enemy's plans at the royal castle? Turns out that it was all probably masterminded by a specific group of assholes in the demon world who deeply resent humans, and I basically landed myself on their shit list thanks to my involvement in Arsil. When the Demon King found out, he wanted me to join his side. Sort of a ‘the enemy of my enemy is my friend’ deal.”

“I see... Can you tell me more about these villains?”

“Sure. You know about the conflict between two major factions in the demon world?”

“I do. We learned about it as part of our initial investigation upon arrival here.”

“Good, that'll speed things up. One side consists of the Demon King and his supporters. The other side is made up of your and my mutual enemy—and the Fiends are apparently at the top of their hierarchy.”

Nell's face grew much darker as she listened to me.

“The Fiends... Mr. Yuki, could you...possibly do me a favor, if it's not too much to ask?”

“You want me to help you, right? I gotchu, fam. I'll let you know about whatever goes down and anything the Demon King tells me.”

“Really?!”

“Yeah. And in exchange, you give me any info you get.”

“Done. I appreciate it. But, um, are you sure about this?”

“What do you mean?”

“We do have intelligence operatives with us, but we also admittedly lack a strong foothold in the demon world. I think it’s likely that whatever information we get our hands on will be trivial compared to what you’re able to learn, Mr. Yuki. Of course, we’ll do our best to support you if anything unexpected happens.”

“Oh, don’t even worry about it. No skin off my nose to team up with you lot.”

It wasn’t gonna hurt to have more sources of information, reducing my dependence on the Demon King’s faction in the process. And it definitely wasn’t a bad thing to have her on my side since I knew how strong she was. I also thought it was safe to assume that the comrades dispatched with her to the demon world were skilled in their own right. Surely they could handle whatever would stand in their way here.

“That all work for you, Leila?”

“Indeed, Lord Yuki.”

I whispered to her out of the corner of my mouth, seeking her approval, and she nodded, beaming. Yeah, okay, you got me. This super clever conversation I’d just had with Nell? All according to Leila’s plan. She’d been pulling the strings from the shadows. After all, I *had* decided to leave negotiations like these up to her, so Demon Lord Yuki was just her puppet now.

All hail Mistress Leila. I’ll follow you to the ends of the world, m’lady.
Wow, I definitely channeled Lew on that last bit.

“Thank you so much, Mr. Yuki. I feel so much better knowing you’re here. I was honestly a bit worried, but I’m confident things will work out one way or another!”

“Mwa ha ha! Then you can take this opportunity to start calling me Dandy Mr. Yuki instead!”

“I definitely won’t be doing that.”

Boo. On second thought, though, she was totally right. I couldn’t even begin to imagine how I’d react to being called “Dandy Mr. Yuki.”



“So, whaddya say we make this tavern our default meeting spot? You know, in case something happens, good or bad? The food was good too.”

“Agreed on all counts.”

That was what we decided after we ate and chatted some more. For the “in case something happens” part, I gave two Communication

Orbs, which I'd bought with DP before coming here, to the hero. They came in pairs, and an orb was a little smaller than a tennis ball. She could use them to get in touch with me whenever she needed to.

Despite being named a Communication Orb, you didn't talk into it like you did a cell phone. The user activated it with their magic, and it would light up the Orb it was paired with. Whoever had that one and saw it glow would understand it as a transmission signal. Pretty simple, really. In that sense, it was less a communication device and more a summoning bell.

I gave Nell a red one and a white one. The white one was for whenever she wanted to meet up to discuss things, while the red was for urgent situations. She might not have the headspace to even think about coming to this pub if she ever had to use the red one. Good thing for us, then, that these Orbs had another function. An Orb could provide the approximate location of the other half of its pair. If the owner of one was ever in danger, the owner of the other could fly to their rescue.

By the way, I had some of these Orbs set up between me and the dungeon too. It was one of the backup measures I'd implemented before I'd left. The folks back home knew to light up their Orbs if trouble came a-callin', so if mine lit up, I could head there right away with a teleportation device. The only downside to these Comm Orbs was that I had to keep them on me at all times instead of just storing them in Inventory. Even taking that weakness into account, though, they more than made up for it by simply being so darn convenient, especially in this world where communication methods as a whole were so few and far between.

Nell's royal conjurer friend messed with an Orb, curiosity burning in her eyes. *Mess around all you want, girlie, just don't break it.* Those things cost a truckload of DP.

You might be wondering why our incarnation of inquisitiveness itself, Miss Leila, wasn't foaming at the mouth to study it. Why, that was because she'd already done just that, of course. When I'd first shown them to her at the Demon King's Castle. Since she'd already gotten her fill, she just smiled calmly at the rest of us, the very picture of tranquility. And yet, maybe because there was something about the devices that she still couldn't wrap her head around, she held onto our halves of the Comm Orb pairs. *I ask that you please refrain from breaking them as well, ma'am.*

"Hey, Mr. Yuki. I just noticed the ring on your finger. Don't tell me you..."

"Huh? Ahhh... Yeah, Lefi gave it to me."

Her question embarrassed me a little, but I still stretched my hand toward her to give her a better look at my ring.

“Th-Then that means—”

“Yup. I married Lefi.”

““M-M-M-*Married*?!””

“You gonna be okay, there?”

I burst out laughing at her hysterical screech.

“Wh-When did that even happen?”

“Not too long ago. After you and I split up at the royal capital.”

“O-Oh, I see...”

Nell continued staring intently at the ring on my finger.

“I mean, I knew you and Lefi got along, but wow... You’re married now, huh? Guess you get along *really* well, then.”

She looked sorta sad when she said that last bit. I tilted my head in confusion, trying to figure out why that was. But as soon as I did, there was a thunderous roar and my Danger Detection ability started going off.

The second I felt it, I shot up from my chair, knocking it down. I grabbed En’s greatsword body, still sheathed and wrapped in fabric, and reflexively turned toward where the warning was coming from. The source of danger was a table hurtling straight at us.

At first, I planned on smashing it into pieces, but it was way bigger than I thought it would be. If I screwed up, any flying debris could cause serious, unnecessary damage to the folks up here or even the people down on the first floor. To keep that from happening, I made the quick decision to change the trajectory of my sword swing just enough to force the table to land in an empty space. But then, Danger Detection went off again, warning me about another source of trouble—the wall exploding.

“Shit!”

There was just enough distance between me and the pieces scattering everywhere for me to dodge. If I did that, though, they’d end up hitting Leila and the others. I couldn’t let that happen, so I repelled the biggest ones with my beloved sword, managing to alter their course ever so slightly. That was when I saw a gorgeous, engraved sword slicing forward from next to me. *Nell*.

I’d forgotten, but she had Danger Detection too. Now that I remembered, it made complete sense that her reaction had been to immediately take off the cloth hiding her distinctive holy sword and help me slice at the flying chunks of wall. As always, I appreciated how reliable of a person she was, even risking exposing her true identity to help those in need.

“En! You know what to do!”

“Okay...!”

“Oh, wow! She really is your sword, Mr. Yuki.”

Hearing my command, En immediately turned off her

Anthropomorphization ability and returned to her original body. I whipped off the fabric wrapped around her and pulled her out of her sheath. Totally ready to fight now, I ignored Nell's surprised shout and scanned the tavern for the source of the disturbance.

"Hey, uh, you think that's...?"

"Yeah. Looks familiar, doesn't it? But where in the world did it come from?"

Through the giant hole in one of the pub walls, we spotted a ridiculously muscular, seriously grotesque, Daruma-lookin' sumbitch. The massive, Forbidden Spirit of the Dead-class freak of an Undead was basically the same as the one we'd fought back in the humans' royal capital. Its stats were almost identical to that one's, but there were some differences, like how this one's *lower* half—and also its right arm—was bulging to a gross extent with muscles. Meanwhile, its left arm and upper half, head included, were still relatively humanoid. Said head was pretty snakelike, though. Seemed like it'd belonged to a demon before being turned into whatever the hell this monstrosity was.

Now, I said "relatively humanoid," but in reality, that only went for part of its appearance. The thing no longer possessed anything resembling consciousness. Drool dripped from its gaping maw and its eyes rolled around crazily, the whites showing more often than not. Its completely lifeless expression, if I could even call it that, emphasized its monstrous existence even more.

The thing was going nuts on the main street outside, with its erratic, violent movements even messing with this tavern. It was indiscriminately attacking any and all demons in sight as they desperately tried to escape in a mass panic. A few adventurers and city guards, who just happened to be in the right place at the right time, were trying to fight it off, their shouts reaching all the way up here. I leaned over the second-floor railing to try to get a better look at the behemoth when Leila muttered something from next to me. She'd been observing it too.

"Mm... That's what happens to those who overdose on a prohibited drug."

"What do you mean?"

Leila inclined her head at my question.

"Ingesting such concoctions allows the user to continuously absorb the surrounding mana, allowing a temporary but remarkable amplification of magic within their body. This results in both their physical and magical capabilities increasing exponentially."

Ah ha. So basically, they're doping.

"And they end up like that if they take too much of it?"

"The absorption of mana doesn't stop, thereby overloading the

body's capacity for magic. That leads to the body's gradual breakdown, eventually affecting the person's mind as well, to the point that they lose their sanity and sense of self entirely. What you see here is the end result. Ten years ago, the drug circulated freely, leading to many instances of Undead outbreaks centered around this sort of creature. Such incidents caused the current Demon King to ban the creation and distribution of the drug, so it should have been eradicated. And yet..."

She gave me that explanation with a puzzled expression.

Despite supposedly being chock-full of magic, I couldn't feel much more than an average amount in the thing. Maybe most of it had gotten used up when it mutated? If so, maybe there might still be some remnant of its original humanoid consciousness or form somewhere? Unlike the other Undead monster, this guy had several abilities on top of Regeneration 6 and Otherworldly Strength 3. My guess was that those other abilities had come from the original person. Based on its current condition, then, if it kept sucking up the mana in the air, its final form would be pure muscle, just like the other Undead colossus.

"Huh. I can't believe it was able to learn Regeneration and Otherworldly Strength just by overdosing. Must be a helluva drug."

"I don't believe that's how it works, though?"

What? Does that mean it had those skills even as a normal demon? But how is that possible? The Undead thing I met in Arsil had the exact same abilities at the exact same levels. This can't be a coincidence. While the wheels in my brain turned, Nell chimed in.

"We don't have time for you two to be having this pleasant little chat."

Yeah, okay, you're right.

Since demons as a whole were stronger than humans, it didn't look like anyone outside had died yet. Part of that was probably because the monster wasn't really fighting properly, though, which gave people a chance to escape. But they couldn't afford to let it keep rampaging either, because at the rate things were going, I could definitely see the number of injured skyrocketing. Somebody dying was only a matter of time at this point, and that'd definitely be tough on the ol' conscience if I just stood idly by and did nothing. I was *not* about that life, so I'd pick the complicated thinking back up after I figured out how to deal with the Undead giant.

"Leila, how were the Undead taken down ten years ago?"

"Since they were originally all anthropoids, they still retained the same weaknesses, so they were either cut down or burned. Those skills you mentioned give me considerable pause, though..."

"Right, so the normal methods are out. Then our only option is..."

I glanced at Nell and she nodded, immediately understanding what I meant.

“My holy magic, right? Understood. Please buy me time.”

“Roger that.”

“I’ll help too.”

Little Miss Royal Conjuror spoke up, determination burning in her sleepy eyes.

“Time for a little monster extermination. Oh, but first, gotta hide my face.”

I opened Inventory, pulled out a mask, and slipped it on. The design was different from the one I’d worn in the royal capital. That one had been inspired by a jester, while this one was very similar to the mask worn by the electricity-controlling Black Reaper, just without the thunderbolt design by the eye. It *did* have a star-shaped jewel under the left eye, though, which I’d put there because the thing looked a little too inhuman and horror-like for my tastes. The Demon King had given me the gem super casually when I’d asked him. *Damn rich bastard.*

By the way, I’d made this mask using the Weapon Enhancement ability, so it technically had a weaponized component in that it could act like a boomerang. It was honestly a really crappy boomerang because it didn’t fly back toward me the one time I’d tried throwing it, but that was no biggie. I didn’t foresee myself *actually* using it as a boomerang. Oh, and I didn’t make an open-mouthed version of this mask. It wasn’t like I had to wear it twenty-four seven this time around, so I figured I didn’t need one.

“Again with the mask, Mr. Yuki? It isn’t even the same as the one you wore last time.”

I shrugged at Nell’s exasperated tone.

“Yeah, yeah. Sue me, why dontcha? Real talk, you guys should put your hoods up and make sure they *stay* up. Never know who’s watching.”

“Makes sense.”

Agreeing with me, Little Miss Royal Conjuror did as I suggested.

“Let’s do what he says, Nell. We can’t go around exposing ourselves right now. And I really don’t think we should intervene in this situation either, but I clearly won’t win that argument.”

“O-Okay, okay! I’ll do it!”

Overpowered by her friend’s rational thinking, Nell hurriedly threw on her hood.

“Ha ha ha! You two sure do get along well. Okay, so, Leila. I want you to evacuate along with the other customers. There’s a good chance that thing won’t chase you if you leave now.”

“Yes, sir.”

“Nell, Ronia, I’m gonna head down there right now. I expect you to back me up as soon as you can!”

As soon as I said that, I grabbed the railing in front of me and jumped over it to get myself straight down to the first floor. Keeping the monstrous giant in sight, I raced out of the tavern.

“Move!”

Seeing me charge into the fray, a few demons who’d been fighting it leaped out of the way. I flew up and swooped right in front of the thing. Then, using my momentum, I swung En down hard, slicing Big Nasty from the top of its head to its groin. The slow-ass titan couldn’t avoid my attack, but unfortunately for everyone here, its Regeneration ability activated almost immediately. Then again, I was just buying time for Nell, so I kept up my assault. Arms: chopped off. Torso: slashed to ribbons. Head: rolling. And just for good measure, I made sure its legs said goodbye to its body.

My last fight with a giant Undead monster had been a close shave. It’d been a tense cycle of me avoiding its attack and landing one of my own. This time around, though, me being at a much higher level meant I was hitting it multiple times *while* I dodged because one, it was much easier to handle En’s incredible heft, and two, I only had to do the bare minimum to evade its blows since I could predict its movements.

“Ha ha! You’re so weak! C’mon, bring it! Where’s that Otherworldly Strength you’re so proud of?!”

Sucked that the enormous gross thing could put itself back together at an extremely fast rate, just like the other one. Me being me, though, I just kept hacking away at the same parts it regrew, meaning it couldn’t counterattack very well.

“Deep Dark Swamp.”

Little Miss Royal Conjurer showed up to assist. She held her staff upright and activated her magic. When she did, the Undead colossus’s legs *glub glub*’d deep into the ground. It desperately tried to dig itself out, but all of its attempts were in vain. Every time it moved, it found itself being dragged back into her magic swamp.

Daaamn. The speed of her magic casting honestly shocked me. I’d seen her drawing on her power, and literally a second later, it was out here in the open. I’d heard her chanting a spell too, but it had all happened so quickly that I didn’t pick up a lot of what she said. That Royal Conjurer class wasn’t just for show, huh?

“W-Wow! That masked young man is amazing!”

“Who even is he, though? He doesn’t look like any adventurer or soldier I’ve seen.”

“That itty-bitty person next to him is a damn fine conjurer too. What incredible accuracy.”

While Little Miss Royal Conjurer and I continued our assault on the Undead behemoth, the demons who'd been fighting it chatted with each other as they watched. Could these jerks have at least a *little* shame? Yeah, sure, I was the one who'd told 'em to get outta the way, but the audacity to just stand there and spectate chapped my ass.

"If you're not gonna make yourselves useful, can you maybe get lost? Christ."

Something's not right. But what...? In my attempt to figure out what the issue was, I laser-focused on the Undead's every movement with my superpowered demon lord vision as I continued slicing away at it. I cut off its hands, then slashed at its torso. It swung its arms aggressively at me like it was swatting at a fly, which I avoided by crouching.

Legs still stuck in the swamp created by Little Miss Royal Conjurer, the thing tumbled forward. I took the opportunity to lop its head off again, simultaneously jumping backward to dodge its desperate punch my way. But then, its arm extended.

"What the hell?!"

Just like a certain King of the Pirates, its stretchy arm raced toward me, hand already regenerated and curled into a fist. I figured it must've forcibly ripped its arm out of its socket, basically disjointing itself to attack me like this. But I didn't have time to consider the mechanics because it'd caught me totally off guard. I rushed to put En up as a blockade, but it wasn't enough to completely protect me from the boulder-like blow and I blasted off.

"Dwwwaaah?!"

"Crimson Lotus Bullet!"

The moment I went flying, Little Miss Royal Conjurer switched immediately from support-type magic to offensive magic. Balls of fire launched one after another from the top of her staff, which she held high in the air, and each one hit the giant square in the face, totally obscuring its vision. It didn't take a genius to figure out that she was distracting it, drawing its attention to her while I was temporarily indisposed. Fortunately, I had managed to keep myself upright. The soles of my feet skidded across the ground as I hurtled backward, but I finally managed to stop a few meters away.

"Phew... That was scary."

"Master...are you all right?"

"Yeah, I'm fine. You saved my neck, En. Thanks."

The only reason I'd managed to guard myself in time was because En had corrected the trajectory of her swing to protect me. Thanks to her, I didn't have any serious injuries despite having taken a direct hit from his punch. If I'd been using a regular sword, I definitely wouldn't have been standing right now.

“I...will protect you, Master.”

“Ha ha! Very reassuring, En.”

I chuckled at her confidence-inspiring words before turning my gaze back to the Undead giant, whose arm was back to normal now. Or, well, as normal as an arm that unnaturally massive could be. Anyway, it was using said arm to protect itself against Little Miss Royal Conjurer’s fireballs. Seemed it’d used the Regeneration ability to reattach its arm to its shoulder. Meaning it could do the stretchy punch however many times it wanted. *Okay, so that’s for sure a rubber skill.* Having seen this thing’s offensive and defensive abilities, though, I might’ve figured something out.

“All right, here goes nothing. Little Miss Royal—I mean, Ronia! Lemme take over!”

“Got it. Are you hurt?”

“I’m fine!”

Our brief conversation over, I rushed toward the monster.

“Take this!”

I jumped and swung En downward like I had the first time around, intending to cut it again from its head to its groin. But I couldn’t. My blade stopped right around its stomach area and refused to go any further. Pulling it out, I moved backward quickly and made sure to keep a good distance between us as it tried to use both fists as hammers. *Now I know what’s wrong.* This was the origin of the weird feeling I had, huh?

Strangely enough, slashing through the giant with En had become a whole lot harder. I could still do it, but every time I swung at it, the burden on my arms got heavier and heavier. That was why I hadn’t been able to cleave through it in one stroke like earlier.

I activated Analysis to confirm my suspicion, and whaddya know, I was right on the money. Its Stamina value had gone up. While fighting, this thing was evolving to be better suited for combat. It was gradually hardening itself so that I couldn’t slice it.

But wait, there’s more. I just realized that the tops of its feet had gotten huge and round like tree trunks. Had to have been in response to Little Miss Royal Conjurer’s foot-trapping magic.

The Undead thing I’d fought in Arsil most definitely hadn’t had this body modification feature. I had no idea how much more it could develop, and it boggled my mind trying to imagine how much stronger it might become at this rate. Shuddering at such a terrifying possibility, I called out to Nell, who’d been desperately chanting this whole time.

“Nell! Get a move on!”

“Salvation: Undead Away!”

My timing couldn’t have been better because lo and behold, she’d

just finished her spell. An enormous cannonball of light shot out of her holy sword, which she was pointing straight at the Undead giant.

“Whooooaaa!”

“Wh-What is that?!”

Everything around us turned a blinding white, and the spectating demons shouted out in shock and confusion. I was already storming toward our opponent.

“Five steps...”

I couldn’t see squat because of the intense brightness, and even if I could, my Demon Eyes weren’t worth a damn in the face of such a massive quantity of magic. En could still see everything even in these conditions, though. I followed her instructions and closed the gap between me and the Undead colossus. When we’d used this move against the previous specimen, it’d counterattacked and we’d had to fire off a second shot to finally put it in the dirt. This time around, I wouldn’t give it the chance to fight back. *I’m a one-shot this mofo!*

“En! Wind Magic!”

“Okay...!”

I asked En to use her Wind Magic while I simultaneously activated her sorcerous circuit-turned-ability, Crimson Flame. Instantly, roaring flames burst forth from her blade. The light Nell had created disappeared too. I could see everything again like usual again, and the thing was right in front of me.

“Master...now!”

At her signal, I swung En down as hard as I could. She timed her Wind Magic perfectly with the moment of impact and we slashed through the monster using her jet-engine state.

“Blow the hell up, shitbag!”



It did just that. Pieces of its body immediately blasted everywhere. Burning bits of its flesh rained down around us, sending the demons nearby rushing for cover. The Undead titan had lost its original grotesque form entirely, now a veritable disgusting mess of gnarled zombie meat. And yet here it was, still trying to regenerate, its remnants squirming and wiggling.

Eventually, though, the jerking came to an end and the creep stopped moving entirely. I exhaled deeply, then shook off the blood and guts and other stuff sticking to En before hoisting her onto my shoulder. Now that I wasn't zoned in on the huge Undead thing, the commotion in the area, which had sounded so far away until just a moment ago, hit me full force.

Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, what a ride. How many more times would I have to deal with zombified horrors like this? Things could've gotten wildly dangerous if Nell hadn't been here. Like, seriously, it'd tried to stitch itself back together even when it was a literal gloop of parts. Without Nell's magic to do some major damage to its regeneration ability, I had no doubt it would've been responsible for a ton of fatalities. It wasn't like people with high-level Holy Magic were dime a dozen, ya know.

That got me thinking about whether the Demon King knew about her. My gut told me that the Blackheart definitely had some sort of info on her. I made a mental note to grill him on it later. While I stood pondering in front of the smoldering remains of Undead flesh, I felt a small tug at the hem of my shirt.

"Hm? What's up?"

It was Little Miss Royal Conjurer.

"Fire."

"Huh? Oh, son of a—"

I turned my head in the direction she was pointing and saw a column of smoke. The fire wasn't that big yet, but it had already spread to a few of the buildings facing the main street. Everyone nearby was doing their best to extinguish the flames.

"Balls in my mouth!"

I quickly activated my water magic and aimed it toward one of the buildings.

"Wait! Wait, Mr. Yuki! You'll destroy them if you use that much water! This is a rescue operation, not a combat one!"

Hearing Nell's panicked voice in the nick of time, I just barely managed to cut off the flow of water.

"Mm, yeah, guess you're right. And when you're right, you're right. Th-Then, how about this much?"

"Still way too much!"

With Nell's help, I adjusted my output until I had just the right amount of water to unleash on the flames. The damage ultimately wasn't too bad by the time the fire was out because it hadn't been burning all that long. As far as injuries went, I didn't see anybody who was hurt, so thank Lucifer for silver linings.

"S-Safe..."

"Not even close, you dolt! The fact that Lefi did the same exact thing last time really makes me think you two are meant for each other! Honestly!"

"Also...you set that fire in the forest, Master."

"I-I'm sorry!"

Nell huffed angrily, her arms crossed. In an unexpected turn of events, her tirade was followed by a telepathic scolding from En, who also sounded kinda fed up with me. I apologized meekly to both of them. *Here lies Demon Lord Yuki, forever outmatched by a hero and his very own daughter. What a tragedy. A moment of silence, please.*

"Over here!"

I looked toward where someone was shouting and saw a troop of soldiers, armed to the teeth and marching quickly in formation. *Must be the demon capital's garrison.* Their uniquely designed armor matched what the soldiers who happened to be here at the start of the incident had been wearing.

"Hmm? You lot are in the Radovan Unit. We received reports that a giant man was going on a rampage, but where is he?"

"Right. About that, Captain. These individuals defeated him."

The man's decorated helmet marked him as a commanding officer. When he questioned one of the soldiers who'd been here this whole time, that was the response he received, along with the soldier pointing us out. Naturally, that led to everyone nearby, including all of the troops who'd just arrived, focusing their attention on us. *Well, this isn't good.*

"Oookayyy. Nell, Ronia, let's skedaddle."

"Huh?! What?! Seriously?! We're running away?!"

"You have a better idea? Because at this rate, he's gonna oh-so-casually suggest something like, 'Why don't you tell us what happened?' I don't wanna answer him, and I seriously doubt that you do either. So, you know what they say: 'he who fights and runs away lives to fight another day.' You're both human, and on top of that, you're a goddamn hero, Nell. You tellin' me you want them to find out?"

Not to mention that I really wasn't in the mood to deal with them, especially if things went sideways.

"Huh. I guess he's right."

"You guess? You guess?! Ugh. I'll never understand how you two

can be so practical in crazy situations like this.”

Nell was exasperated after hearing how quickly and casually Little Miss Royal Conjurer agreed with me. By this point, I saw Leila making her way back to us now that the thing was crushed, both literally and figuratively, next to us.

“Leila, we’re outta here!”

“Understood.”

“It seems you three saved our city. If you don’t mind, I’d like to ask a few— Hey! Wait! Stop right there!”

We bolted at the speed of light before the captain could close in on us. He took a few steps in an attempt to chase us, but after taking note of the surroundings, he seemed to decide that dealing with the aftermath was more important. Sighing, he stopped and turned right back around.

“Pheeew... We should be good this far away, right?”

I huffed out a breath, seeing no one else around in this mazelike back alley.

“I think so... Never a boring moment with you around, Mr. Yuki.”

“Oh, hey, thanks for the compliment.”

“I’m not complimenting you.”

Nell glared at me and I laughed in response, shrugging carelessly.

“Aw, crud. I forgot to pay for our dinner.”

“Gah, we didn’t pay either!”

It obviously wasn’t on purpose, but we’d still ended up pulling a dine and dash. While I tried to decide when would be a good time to go in tomorrow and settle the bill—assuming the situation had calmed down by then—Leila cut in.

“You have no cause for concern. I paid for all of us before leaving the tavern.”

“Y-You did? Thanks, Leila. Lemme know how much it was when we get back to the castle. I’ll pay you back.”

I expected no less of my ultimate-weapon maid. She never failed to measure up and then some.

This talk of money reminded me that I should’ve probably seen about paying for the repairs to the buildings I’d set on fire. On second thought, though, I could just have the Demon King foot the bill instead. After all, I *did* take down the Undead giant and prevent a serious catastrophe, so it wasn’t like he could really fault me. *Yeah, good argument.* I’d go with that. And if, for whatever reason, he wouldn’t give in, he could take it out of my compensation for allying with him.

“Thank you, Miss Leila. You really did us a huge favor. Um, let’s see, what did Ronia and I order...?”

“Here. For our share.”

“Thank you. Yes, this is the correct amount.”

Little Miss Royal Conjuror tapped her index finger against her cheek as she mentally calculated her and Nell’s total. Once she finished, she handed the money over to Leila. Nell seemed embarrassed by the amount for some reason, which I found kinda cute.

“Ahem... Right, then, Mr. Yuki. Despite the fracas, are we still maintaining that tavern as our meeting spot?”

“Yeah. It’s the only place we’re both familiar with. We *could* use the castle we’re staying in since anyone can see it from basically anywhere in the city, but you two probably don’t wanna run the risk of getting too close to the demon world’s leader, right?”

“Agreed. Based on what you and Miss Leila told us, I’m almost sure we could get him to cooperate with us too, but... But Ronia and I can’t make that decision alone, you see. So I think it would be best if we held off on visiting the castle in the meantime.”

“The tavern it is, then. Shouldn’t be a problem since we’re only using it as a meeting point.”

“Got it. We’re heading out now. I’ll contact you with the magical device if anything comes up!”

“Roger dodger. Use it whenever.”

We split up into our respective pairs, with Leila and I walking down the road leading to the castle.

Side Story 2: On the Way Back

“Good grief. Mr. Yuki hasn’t changed a bit.”

Nell and Ronia were traveling to their inn as night fell. The moon rose high in the sky and light spilled out from magical devices installed all over the city, brightening the demon capital’s darkened streets. Bathed in the gentle glow of both natural and artificial illumination, the city appeared very fantasy-like.

“Why is he always, *always* so bloody reckless? Honestly.”

Despite her exasperated tone of voice, Nell nevertheless seemed to be enjoying herself. Ronia studied her friend as though she were some strange creature and commented curiously.

“You seem happy.”

“D-Do I?”

Nell’s reply sounded somewhat troubled.

“You do. Why, though? Was meeting him really such a big deal?”

“Um, well...Mr. Yuki is super strong, you see. I was incredibly surprised to see him here, but I was also glad. I don’t feel as worried with him around. And wow, has he gotten so much more powerful since the last time we were together. It hasn’t even been that long. I don’t think I could win a fight against him now even if I used my full strength.”

“Hmm... I agree. He was a force to be reckoned with.”

Thinking back on their earlier battle, Ronia acknowledged Nell’s words as the other girl spoke excitedly about the young man. The image of his fierce battle against the unknown enemy was burned into her mind. Ronia didn’t want to believe that he was even stronger than her friend, an actual hero, but after what she’d witnessed, she had no choice but to accept such a reality.

It wasn’t an exaggeration to state that Nell was one of if not the strongest individual in the human world. While there were, per the adventurer hierarchy, a few Orichalcum-class adventurers on par with her in terms of power, Nell was still growing as both a fighter and a person. And it had been less than four years since she had started engaging in actual combat training.

As she was now, she could probably defeat most demons despite them being overwhelmingly more powerful than humans. The fact that her amazing friend herself had declared that she was no match for him, when coupled with them being in the demon world, meant he

was most likely a demon too. He hadn't said so explicitly, but that was the only reasonable conclusion she could arrive at.

Concerning what he and Nell had discussed back at the tavern, specifically about the last time they'd been together, Ronia recalled Nell mentioning "Her Highness Ilyr." There was only one person in the humans' country she could have been referring to using such a form of address. In summation, that young demon man knew her incredible friend the hero, surpassed her in terms of ability, *and* was acquainted with their kingdom's princess. Taking that all into account, Ronia strongly suspected that he and the man wearing the jester's mask during the attempted rebellion in Arsil were one and the same.

"I see. No wonder His Majesty always sidestepped the topic of the man's identity."

"Huh? What was that?"

"Nothing."

If the people found out that their country had been saved by a demon, the nation's hard-won stability might collapse again, which would present a serious problem. The discovery that Nell, a member of the Church, was friends with a demon would also become an issue. *It's fine.* Ronia would trust him since her friend did, though perhaps she would avoid getting into the particulars with their other comrades. Regardless, she doubted that they would question her all that deeply once she told them they'd secured an ally in the demon world. That information alone would likely be enough to satisfy them.

"I understand you trust him. But there's more to it than that. At least on your side, right?"

Ronia asked the girl next to her.

"O-Oh, gosh. D-Did I really look that happy?"

"Yes, you did. Insanely happy."

From Nell's attitude alone, Ronia was able to surmise that her friend's feelings for the young man went beyond simple friendliness and admiration for his strength. It almost seemed that she was in love.

"Well, uh..."

Nell smiled ruefully, looking a bit shy now. The truth was that Nell had been overjoyed to see him again, even if it had been pure coincidence. As outrageous, selfish, illogical, and childish as he was, she couldn't have been happier to have run into him here. He was so strong, and despite having a frustrating side that she could never quite understand, he created a lively, fun atmosphere wherever he went.

She suspected that he possessed a special, intangible something that attracted others. Whether that was his power as a demon lord or his own personal charm, she didn't know. And yet, the ovine woman with him and the child he'd called his own—and she herself—were all, for reasons that were impossible to discern, undoubtedly drawn to

him.

But wow, Mr. Yuki and Lefi finally got married, huh? She shouldn't have been surprised. For as much as they snarled at one another, they had always been extremely compatible. A stinging pain lanced through her chest at the thought. Almost instantly, Nell shook her head violently, ridding herself of unnecessary thoughts. Then, she spoke to the girl next to her.

"In any case, Mr. Yuki's a fun person to be around. You'll learn that too the more you spend time with him, Ronia. More importantly, let's hurry back to the inn. The others should be on their way too."

Having said her piece, Nell cheerfully—or so it seemed—picked up her pace.

"Right."

Ronia noticed her friend's emotional struggle, but, unsure how to talk to her about it, chose instead to nod and follow behind her down the path.

Epilogue: Operation Commenced

During the time Yuki was fighting alongside the hero.

“My word, Demon King. To introduce a demon lord as our next member... And one boasting such absurd strength, no less.”

The Elf Queen, Naforazey, glared pointedly at the Demon King, Fynar, who beamed at her as he always did.

“Ha ha ha! I’m *sorry*, I’m *sorry*. But *if* I’d told you about Yuki’s *true* identity as a demon lord *ahead* of time, you would have been *overly* cautious, no? And that *wouldn’t* have helped our *cause*.”

“Well, you aren’t wrong.”

“Besides, you and Yuki are such *good* friends now, so *I* say all’s well that *ends* well. Especially considering that you gave him *The Emblem of Honor*. That’s something you hardly *ever* hand out.”

“Anyone would jump at the chance and use any means necessary to secure a fellowship with a man as powerful as him. And don’t pretend like you didn’t guide the conversation to achieve that precise result. Our discussion went just as you predicted following the introductions. Truly, are we all just pawns dancing in the palm of your hand?”

“No, no, no. You *overestimate* me. I won’t *deny* that, at least in *this* instance, things went as *planned*, but if things *always* went according to my plans, I *definitely* wouldn’t be working so *hard*, now would I? Case in point, Yuki’s *maid* managed to talk *circles* around and *wheelde* concessions from me not so long ago.”

“Did she, now? Is the world perhaps coming to an end?”

At the Elf Queen’s surprised look and remark, the Demon King shrugged, his own expression charmingly refreshing.

“It’s *true*. I haven’t been *routed* in a negotiation like that in *quite* some time. I *tried* to maintain a hard line, but there’s *no* doubt that she came out on top.”

Naforazey wanted to press him on the details, but alas, they still had work to do. She suppressed her curiosity and directed the conversation back to the task at hand.

“In any case, here’s what you wanted. I wrote down everything I could recall seeing.”

“*Wonderful*, thank you. As *promised*, I’ll make sure any humans thinking to seize *control* of the elves’ forests are fed *false* information. Once they *receive* it, they *won’t* be able to declare war for a *while*.”

The Demon King took the parchment listing Yuki's stats from the Elf Queen and very casually uttered those momentous words while he read through it.

"Good. I'm counting on you. That takes care of one thing, then. Frankly speaking, though, we're no match for these humans and their never-ending greed. We elves can still trust most of the nearby lords due to our mutual business interests, but I curse the arrogant fools who think they can invade our lands after gaining just the smallest bit of power."

"Well, they have such *short* life spans that they're always *desperate* to leave behind some sort of *proof* that they even lived. Hmm... 'The Demon Lord ? ? World,' 'Enemy of Humanity,' 'One ? ? ?'... *Just* as I suspected. You couldn't see *much* about his abilities either. He *seems* to have so many *fascinating* titles, which only makes me *more* curious."

"I must admit, it's been some time since I've met someone whose information I couldn't view. But the truly amazing title is yet to come. You'll see, Demon King."

"'? King of Dragonkind'... I'm not *sure* what word that question mark *attached* to the 'King of Dragonkind' title could be replacing, but it *doesn't* matter. This is *proof* that he defeated the black dragon who went to the *Demonic Forest*."

"Hmph, so you knew already?"

"Not for *certain*, no. Merely *conjecture* on my part, especially when the man *himself* refused to provide *clarity* on the topic. Which is why *this* information is a *huge* help to me."

The Elf Queen huffed imperiously at his overly easygoing attitude.

"I can never tell how honest you're being, Demon King. Although I'll grant that I understand your logic in bringing him into the fold."

At best, there were fewer than a hundred individuals in this world who could slay a dragon. And were one to get any ideas in their head about conquering dragonkind, they would need to be ready and willing to sacrifice half of their own species, as a dragon's might was not to be taken lightly. The only way for one to acquire the King of Dragonkind title was to defeat the previous holder in a one-on-one battle. If the holder was defeated by many instead of one, the title would remain unclaimed.

Therefore, though the demon lord appeared to be nothing more than a youth, he held the power to defeat a dragon. And not just any dragon, but one strong enough to take the title of King of Dragonkind for himself. *What a frightening existence.* From the very depths of her heart, the Elf Queen was glad to have the young man as an ally and not an enemy. He didn't seem particularly well-versed in the art of negotiation, though. Yet despite his youthful visage, the demon lord was quite the intellectual, using his brain thoughtfully instead of

simply bullying his opponents to get his way.

On numerous occasions, she had destroyed labyrinths that had sprung up near her home. All those demon lords had been little more than feral beasts who could barely communicate—creatures unworthy of any bonds of fellowship. In comparison, Demon Lord Yuki was an outlier in several aspects. She could very well understand now why the Demon King before her, who was terrifying in his own way, had been so insistent on convincing the demon lord to join their cause no matter the cost.

“I’d *like* for my relationship with him to last as *long* as possible. I think *you* would benefit from the *same*.”

“I was planning on doing just that, so I certainly don’t need to hear it from *you*. As if I would extend an offer of friendship so easily.”

“You’re *right*, you’re right. Forgive me. You won’t hear another *word* from me on the topic.”

While the two of them discussed the demon lord, a silhouette approached the Demon King stealthily.

“Lord Fynar, I’m ready to report.”

“Hm? *Right*, then. Go on.”

“Are... Are you certain?”

The unspoken implication in his subordinate’s question was whether the Elf Queen should be privy to the information as well. Fynar nodded in reply.

“Yes, we can *trust* her. I consider her a *close* friend in my inner circle who’s *already* familiar with quite a *few* matters I’m involved in.”

“I have no memory of becoming friends with you.”

“Oh, me, oh, *my*. How *cruel* of you to say that.”

The Demon King deliberately affected a devastated air before encouraging his subordinate with a dramatically resigned, “Well, *there* we have it. Now, your *report*.”

“Demon Lord Yuki made contact with the human champion. Not long after, they both accidentally encountered and then proceeded to defeat the individual who was in the terminal stage induced by a certain prohibited drug.”

For a moment, the Demon King’s eyes widened in surprise. Then, he laughed.

“Gah ha... What a *terrific* course of events in such a *short* period of time. But let me *ask* you for the details in *order*. We’ll *start* with the *human* champion. Can I *assume* it’s the same young lady who *trespassed* into the demon world once *before*?”

“Indeed it is. What are your orders, Your Majesty?”

“Hmm. You can leave her *alone* for now. We *share* the same *enemy* as her and her *comrades*. I wouldn’t go so *far* as to say that the enemy of my enemy is my *friend*, but there’s no *harm* in our enemy having

more enemies. We'll let *Yuki* handle her and her people."

"Understood."

"Wonderful. *Next* is the matter of the *artificial* Undead, yes? Why don't you *tell* me how it *happened* and if any *damage* was caused."

"A mana addict suddenly lurched out of a back alley and onto High Street, at which point he lost control and went berserk. Initially, a few adventurers and soldiers who happened to be at the scene engaged him, but it didn't take Demon Lord *Yuki* very long to take note of the commotion. He, along with the hero and her companion, acted to confront the creature and eventually defeated it. Regarding the fallout, a few people sustained injuries along the lines of broken bones. Several buildings suffered damage from the battle as well, but there were no fatalities."

"Yes, I see. That's *great* news. Please dispatch *healers* to tend to the *wounded*. I'd *also* like you to send *workers* to attend to the building repairs as *soon* as possible."

"As you wish, Your Majesty."

"The *situation* was resolved quickly and neatly because of *Yuki* and his friends. I'll *have* to remember to *thank* him later. Ah, one *more* thing. Can you *confirm* if the mana addict in *this* instance was also an improved version?"

"Yes, I can."

"I *see*... My goodness. To think that the *Fiends* not only revived but *improved* the nefarious drug I *exposed* and thoroughly *eradicated* once upon a time. They certainly don't lack *nerve*, do they?"

"That is what makes them such good sport for you, Demon King. Surely you're not complaining?"

The Demon King laughed inscrutably at the Elf Queen's snide remark before a thoughtful expression settled on his face.

"Hmm, based on the *various* locations mana addicts have appeared so *far*, I *suspect* the Fiends are *experimenting* with something. Or conducting a *field test*, perhaps?"

"A field test, my lord?"

Fynar inclined his head in response to his subordinate's question.

"That's *right*. They're most *likely* trying to ascertain the efficacy of the *weapons* they create using the prohibited drug *and* where our defenses are the *weakest*. Can you bring me a *map* showing all the *locations* where artificial Undead have appeared?"

"Yes, Your Majesty. Right away."

A few minutes later, another subordinate brought Fynar a map of the demon capital with all sorts of notes jotted on it. He scrutinized it, his eyes roving over the paper.

"Mm-hmm... I was *right*. *Each* of these sites with artificial *Undead* incidents was *strategically* chosen to determine *how long* it would take

the garrison to *arrive* and *defeat* the creatures. In *short*, they're laying the *groundwork* to *invade* Leigeghegg."

"I applaud you, Demon King. You deduced all that from a single map alone."

Naforazey sounded unwittingly impressed by his analysis.

"Well, as *powerless* as I am, conjectures like *these* are the only thing I'm *good* at. Accordingly, I predict that the *next* artificial Undead outbreaks will occur *here*, here, and here. So make *sure* the special response units we established are *ready* to mobilize at a *moment's* notice."

"Understood. Should we make any changes to our defense arrangements?"

"No. No changes. I *don't* want them to realize that we *know*. If *possible*, I'd rather they become *careless* in their arrogance so that we can *catch* any perpetrators red-handed. In *exchange*, however, do dispatch *more* of our covert operatives to these areas so that we can *detect* any abnormalities right away."

"Affirmative, my lord."

When his subordinate bowed in acknowledgment, the Demon King nodded energetically, satisfied.

"*Thank* you for the report. Now, then, *annoyed* as I am at being *forced* onto the defensive, I believe it's *well* past time for *us* to make *our* move."



"Gooooood morning, Yuki. I heard *all* about what happened *yesterday*. Must have been *quite* the ordeal, hmm?"

It was the day after we took down the giant Undead thing. I'd been summoned to the Demon King's throne room again, where I found him waiting for me, his usual grin on his face.

"Boy, did I ever call that. I just freaking *knew* you had people watching me."

I sure as hell hadn't told him anything, so he just confirmed my suspicion that I'd been under surveillance all along. *This sneaky asshole*.

"So. I want you to tell me exactly what the heck that thing was. There's no way you don't know, so don't try to play me."

"Okay, you got me. I was *planning* on doing so anyway, but *first*, on a related note, let's *discuss* a *request* I have for you."

"What kind of request?"

The Demon King nodded before answering my question.

"Yuki. I'd *like* for you to enter a *tournament*."

Special Story: The Two on a Moonlit Night

A field of stars blanketed the night sky and the moon shone dazzlingly. Celestial light stretched from one end of the world to the other, painting the night sky like the Milky Way. Between that and my super demon lord vision, I had no problem seeing in the dark in this world without streetlights and electricity. And because of how clean and clear the air here was, I could see so far away that it threw off my sense of distance. The whole experience almost made me think I, too, was a part of the starry sky as Lefi and I flew side by side in a land dominated by night.

“Pray tell, Yuki, how far are we going? I believe we have traveled quite some distance already.”

“Uhhh...just a bit farther.”

After dinner, I’d invited Lefi on a walk as a pretext for my real goal, so here we were outside, but...

“Yuki...you are lost, yes?”

“N-No? Definitely not...is what I’d *like* to say, but I’m also not completely positive yet that it’s the *right* thing to say.”

“Which is it, then?”

My wife looked and sounded fed up with me. *Okay, fine, you’re right. I’m lost. Happy?*

It wasn’t my fault, though! Our destination tonight was in the forest we were flying over, I just couldn’t see diddly-squat in the pitch darkness down there. The trees were so dense that it made it hard to pinpoint a location from the sky during the day, let alone at night. The light shining down from the sky could only do so much.

Dang it, I should’ve just brought her here in the afternoon. No, wait, then there wouldn’t have been any point. Argh! I should’ve at least placed a landmark in that case.

Even though we were still flying, Lefi somehow managed to find a way to shrug.

“Well, it is what it is. As you invited me on a walk, we can consider your request fulfilled in a sense. Besides, I do not mind a leisurely stroll through the clouds like this with you.”

“Lefi.”

“What?”

“You are a goddess with no equal and I bow before your wings.”

“I am glad you finally accept this truth, so henceforth, I expect you to further revere me. Specifically, should you double or even triple my allotment of confections, you may soon find yourself extravagantly favored by the divinity you see before you.”

“My dear, dear wife. What I say next comes solely from the kindness in my heart. I beseech you to keep that in mind. Now... If you eat that many sweets, you’re totally gonna get fat.”

“Fat? Hmph, what nonsense. Such a phenomenon only applies to those with low metabolisms who cannot convert surplus provisions into magical energy to store internally. For beings like us whose bodies are fully and deeply adapted to mana, we can easily turn the things we eat into magical energy. In fact, our magic grows more powerful the more we consume.”

“Huh? For real? That’s pretty awesome. In that case, I’ll—”

“No. I lied.”

“—stuff my face from now...on... Wait, what?! You *lied*?! Goddammit!”

Well, I sure got taken for a ride in more ways than one just now.

“But it is true that I do not gain weight easily, and one can in fact convert food into magical energy. Any surplus is discharged directly into the air, however, so it does not make you stronger.”

Now I know why her body never changes even though she eats me out of dungeon and home. I’d honestly thought it was because her true form was a dragon, meaning all that food had no effect on her human form since it was just a temporary thing.

“For crying out loud, woman. Had me going for a second there. Anyway, I won’t give you more sweets because I don’t want the little girls copying you and thereby adding to the food budget. In exchange, though, I’ll let you touch my wings whenever you want, so you can give me your divine blessing anytime, anywhere.”

“Hmm... Fine, I accept. You may now cry tears of joy, for starting today, your goddess will shower you infinitely with her divine protection.”

“Heh heh. Thanks a bunch, babe. By the way, what exactly do you mean by ‘divine protection’?”

“It is something that will make you want to devote yourself in service to me every day.”

“So I don’t actually *get* anything out of this?!”

Despite my exasperation, we continued our silly conversation, neither of us even a little bored. Just a bit later, I finally spotted where I wanted to go.

“Ah ha, there it is. Lefi, follow me.”

“Understood.”

We both zoomed down and landed.

“Well, well. This is the spring Rir guided you, Iluna, and myself to.”

She was right, but it had completely transformed. Not even a single fish was swimming in the water, and since there was no breeze whatsoever, it was still and clear. Plus, a basic but sturdy stone bridge crossed over to the center of the spring. The moonlight spilling through the trees lit up that small central area, making it feel isolated from the rest of the forest. It was as if that spot alone was connected directly to the night sky.

From far away, I could hear the faint sounds of insects chirping and monsters howling. For whatever reason, though, next to nothing actually lived near this spring. It was so quiet here that it almost created the illusion that time itself had stopped.

“A ceremonial place... Did you do all this, Yuki?”

“Yeah. ‘Cause, you know, you did the whole Dragon’s Vow thing with me, but I didn’t really give you anything except some words. That didn’t sit right with me at all, so I made this place based on what I know of people pledging their lives to each other.”

I’d built everything from scratch using earth magic and items like tree clippers I’d bought with DP. In my head, I’d been going for a woodland ritual hall type of look. Just like the time I’d built my castle, I’d gone through a lot of trial and error with models before finally landing on a design I found perfect, which I’d ended up using as my mental image. A lot of time, energy, and changes had gone into it, but I couldn’t have been happier with the final product. Of course, I’d never gotten married in my previous life, so it was based entirely on my imagination, which meant I’d probably missed a bunch of stuff. Oh well.

“Right, ahem... Shall we get to it then?”

“Yes. Please.”

Lefi looked simultaneously embarrassed and happy as she nodded.

“Okay... How’d it go again...? ‘Demon Lord Yuki, do you swear to walk hand in hand with Lefisios, in sickness and in health, for better or worse, for all the days of your lives?’ Yes. I, Demon Lord Yuki, do solemnly swear to pledge myself forever to Lefisios for all the days of our lives.”

“What in the world are you doing?”

Lefi stared up at me like I’d lost my mind when I used a high-pitched voice for the priest’s lines and my regular voice for the groom’s.

“Well, besides the bride and groom, a real wedding ceremony is officiated by a priest. There needs to be a witness too. Since we’re the only ones here, I figured I’d at least play the part of the priest.”

“I find myself losing interest the longer I listen to that grating

voice, so you might reconsider using it if you care to see this through to the end.”

Yeaaaah. I couldn't argue her point because I'd managed to turn *myself* off with it. My only excuse for even thinking it up was an attempt to hide my embarrassment over our ceremony. After I'd won my fight against the dickhole dragon, the adrenaline pumping through my veins'd had me spilling my guts left and right. I'd been too amped up back then to feel any kind of shyness, but doing this stone-cold sober was definitely putting me through a bit of a mental wringer.

I didn't know for sure if Lefi could see clean through me and my pathetic front, but she clasped both of my hands in hers with a light laugh. Then, she spoke to me like she was soothing a little kid.

“There is no need for you to observe the formalities so strictly. All I wish to hear are your own words.”

My own words, huh?

I silently contemplated her request for a few minutes. Once I'd gathered my thoughts, I started voicing them out to her.

“Lefi. I swear to live each day by your side, joking about and fighting over the dumbest things. Until I take my last breath, I swear to walk the path of life together with you, being the best husband I can possibly be.”

For as long as this body exists in this world, I'll stake everything I have on us. Let's spend the rest of our lives together.

“Hah hah! Indeed, those words suit you much better.”

“I know, right? So, um, Lefi...you have anything to say to me? I sure would love to hear it if you do...”

“Hmm... R-Right, it is my turn now? Right.”

Just like I'd done, she spent a few minutes thinking about what she wanted to say. Once she was ready, she took her time with her words, reflecting on them. Her voice was confident and steady.

“Yuki. I vow to live each day with you to my heart's content, idling as I please, arguing with you as I do. So long as I have this life, I vow to tread through this world by your side, supporting you as the ideal mate.”

“Figures that half of it is about what *you* want.”

“It is only natural since I am speaking from the heart. Do you find it objectionable?”

“Nah, no way.”

She smirked at me and I laughed wryly in response. *Jeez. Always gotta one-up me, dontcha?*

“What comes after the vows?”

“Next is...the rings, but we already did that. Which means the last part is a k-kiss to seal the deal.”

“A ki— Y-Yes, I see. Then so we shall.”

Even in the dim light, I could clearly see scarlet staining the silver-haired girl's cheeks as she peeked up at me. No doubt in my mind that my face was just as red. Staring at each other, we couldn't help but poke a little fun.

"What is that expression? You call to mind a boiled octopus."

"You're one to talk, woman."

We both started cracking up and didn't stop for a good while. Eventually, though, our laughter died down. Back to the moment, our fingers still entwined, I slowly lowered my face until my forehead gently thumped against hers. Our eyes locked, and we stayed like that for some time. Her heated gaze ensnared me, refusing to let go, but I had no desire to look away regardless. Her soft, excited breaths drifted over my skin, ticklish and arousing at the same time. They clearly conveyed the intensity of her passion for me.

Moonlight illuminated us. Lefi and I were the only ones in existence. The world had narrowed down to just the two of us, almost as if our very souls were melding. Neither of us said a word as her emotions flowed into me and mine into her.

Suddenly, she closed her jewel-like eyes. I took that as my signal to do the same. Our faces drew closer until our lips finally...

Afterword

Hello, I'm Ryuyu, the writer of this story. Thank you very much for buying volume four!

This volume actually released in the same month as the manga's first volume. I was insanely happy when I found out about the manga adaptation, but the manga's publication makes me even happier, you know? I'm extremely grateful. If you find yourself interested in reading the manga too, please do pick up a copy. It'd make me overjoyed!

I didn't realize I'd basically been advertising myself until now, so please allow me to finish this off with acknowledgments. To my editor, who diligently reviewed and fixed my errors down to the smallest details. To Daburyu for bringing my work so beautifully to life. To Note Tono for always putting up with my annoying requests so patiently. To everyone else involved in the production of this work, and to the readers who have stuck with me. Thank you so much from the bottom of my heart.

Please look forward to Yuki's journey in the demon world!



Black Dragon
Girodio Gyuohga

His class is Dragon King.

Aims to make Left his mate
and take over the world.

"An insect
would presume
to be my
opponent?"

"Show me
whatcha got,
dipshit dragon,
because I'm
hella strong
right now."

Now I'm a
DEMON LORD!
Happily Ever After with
Monster Girls
in My **DUNGEON**

The Young Man
Reborn in Another World
As a Demon Lord

Yuki

4



New Pet #1
Orochi

A giant
blood serpent
with lustrous
red scales

New Pet #4
Seimi

A translucent, amorphous, blue
water sprite that floats in the air

New Pet #3
Byaku

A bakeneko with
beautiful white fur
and a forked tail

New Pet #5
Lewin
(Pet Name: Lew)

New Pet #6
Leila
Of the
Ovinet Race

New Pet #7
Iluna
Vampire

New Pet #2
Shii
Healing Slime

New Pet #8
Lefisios
(Pet Name: Lefi)

New Pet #9
Fluffrir
(Pet Name: Bu)

New Pet #10
Yata

A noir crow with
jet-black feathers
and sharp eyes

New pet summons
to strengthen the dungeon!



"Well done,
Haloria. You
really saved my
neck here."

"You don't know
how *incredibly* happy
I am that you made
the journey *all* the
way out here.
Perfect timing too,
so *many* thanks."

The King Ruling over
the Demon World

**Fynar
Regnerius
Saturnia**

A top-class, talented
strategic-type demon king
Summoned Yuki to help
with their "situation"...

"Think
nothing of it,
Your Majesty!"

A member of
Fynar's Covert
Imperial Guard

Haloria Leiroat

Excels at planning and
working behind the
scenes.

Sought Yuki out as
Fynar's messenger...

"Sooo...
you're the
one who
summoned
me here?"

Author: Ryuyu

Illustrator: Daburyu

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Now I'm a
DEMON LORD!
Happily Ever After with
Monster Girls
in My **DUNGEON**



Black Dragon
Girodio Gyuohga

His class is Dragon King.

Aims to make Left his mate
and take over the world.

"An insect
would presume
to be my
opponent?"

"Show me
whatcha got,
dipshit dragon,
because I'm
hella strong
right now."

Now I'm a
DEMON LORD!
Happily Ever After with
Monster Girls
in My **DUNGEON**

The Young Man
Reborn in Another World
As a Demon Lord

Yuki

4



New Pet #1
Orochi

A giant
blood serpent
with lustrous
red scales

New Pet #4
Seimi

A translucent, amorphous, blue
water sprite that floats in the air

New Pet #3
Byaku

A bakeneko with
beautiful white fur
and a forked tail

New Pet #5
Lewin
(Pet Name: Lew)

New Pet #6
Leila
Of the
vampire race

New Pet #2
Shii
Healing Slime

New Pet #7
Lefisios
(Pet Name: Lefi)
Ancient Dragon

New Pet #8
Fluffrir
(Pet Name: Bii)
Fenrir

New Pet #9
Yata
A noir crow with
jet-black feathers
and sharp eyes

New Pet #10
Iluna
Vampire

New pet summons
to strengthen the dungeon!



"Well done,
Haloria. You
really saved my
neck here."

"You don't know
how *incredibly* happy
I am that you made
the journey *all* the
way out here.
Perfect timing too,
so *many* thanks."

The King Ruling over
the Demon World

**Fynar
Regnerius
Saturnia**

A top-class, talented
strategic-type demon king
Summoned Yuki to help
with their "situation"...

"Think
nothing of it,
Your Majesty!"

A member of
Fynar's Covert
Imperial Guard

Haloria Leiroat

Excels at planning and
working behind the
scenes.

Sought Yuki out as
Fynar's messenger...

"Sooo...
you're the
one who
summoned
me here?"

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My Dungeon: Volume 4
by Ryuyu

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MAO NI NATTANODE, DUNGEON TSUKUTTE JINGAI MUSUME
TO HONOBONO SURU Vol. 4

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